



ESSENTIALLY ELLINGTON

2025 ESSENTIALLY ELLINGTON

COMPETITION & FESTIVAL RECORDING AND APPLICATION GUIDELINES

SUBMISSION DUE DATE

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2024 BY 11:59PM EST

FESTIVAL DATES

MAY 7-11, 2025 IN NEW YORK CITY

Please read through the Guidelines carefully before completing your application form and recording submission for the 2025 *Essentially Ellington* Competition & Festival. There are significant changes for our 30th Anniversary celebration, so please feel free to contact us at 212.258.9861 or ee@jazz.org with any questions.

In 2025, *Essentially Ellington* will accept the top 25 bands across the United States and Canada to the Competition. In addition, 5 international bands will be invited, for a total of 30 participating ensembles. This year there will be no regions or categories; we are looking for the top 25 bands overall to represent the United States and Canada.

You are encouraged to make a recording of your band performing three charts, no matter what your level of ensemble or experience. Every submission receives thorough qualitative and quantitative comments from our recording adjudicators. Financial concerns should not prohibit any band from submitting a recording for competition, as there is funding available for travel reimbursement, and we have many fundraising ideas to assist you.

RECORDING AND APPLICATION GUIDELINES

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Applications must be submitted via [Acceptd](#).
- Each tune must be its own track.



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- Each piece must be recorded live, with the track beginning just before the band performs and ending immediately afterwards. Any editing, including splicing, overdubbing or double tracking will result in disqualification.
- The recording should be of the best quality possible, though professional recording is not necessary or required.
- No artificial recording techniques (i.e. reverb, echo, etc.) should be utilized.
- Total performance time of all three (3) tracks must not exceed seventeen (17) minutes.

REPERTOIRE, PERFORMANCE AND PERSONNEL

REPERTOIRE OPTIONS

Bands must select three (3) tunes from the *Essentially Ellington* library for their Competition application. These three selections must meet the following guidelines:

- At least one (1) tune must be selected from the 2024-25 *Essentially Ellington* repertoire. You may select more than one if you feel it best suits your band. NOTE: Two of the titles from the *Essentially Ellington* library – “The Tattooed Bride” and “A Tone Parallel to Harlem (Harlem Suite)” – are considerably longer than the rest of the charts in the library. Should you choose to record and/or perform either tune for the Competition & Festival, it will count as two (2) tunes. Only in this situation should you submit two (2) instead of three (3) tracks as part of your application. When recording “The Tattooed Bride” for the Competition, it will be scored from the opening through one measure before II and again starting at II through the end of the chart. “A Tone Parallel to Harlem” will be scored from the opening through m. 185 and again beginning m. 186 through the end.
- At least one (1) tune must be a Duke Ellington transcription. All titles published through the *Essentially Ellington* library are eligible for submission. While you may include up to two (2) tunes featuring the music of Benny Carter, Mary Lou Williams, Count Basie, Dizzy Gillespie, Tadd Dameron, Chick Webb, Machito, Gerry Mulligan or Benny Golson with your application, at least one (1) tune must be a Duke Ellington transcription. For a full list of music in the *EE* library, please visit jazz.org/ee. Choose pieces that best display the strengths of your band. Pieces must be performed in their entirety.



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NEW IN 2025

Adhering to the same guidelines above, bands invited to the Competition & Festival should prepare four (4) *Essentially Ellington* tunes. All 30 finalist bands will play three (3) tunes for the initial round of Competition. The top 10 bands selected for the second round of competition will be required to swap in any one (1) tune from the *EE* library – one that was NOT performed during the first round - for their second performance on Rose Stage.

INSTRUMENTATION AND SUBSTITUTIONS

All performances should be one player per part; you may include all players by rotating them among the pieces. Substitution of instruments is acceptable as long as parts are not transposed and ensemble parts are played as written. Be aware that substitutions will have an impact on the sound of the band.

Improvisation is an essential part of performing this music. Choose soloists based on what is best for your band and be strategic about how solo sections are used.

CHANGING THE ARRANGEMENT

You may make changes to arrangements, so long as they maintain the integrity of the original piece and the style of that composer. If material is added that does not produce the same spirit and intent as the original, the power of the music is weakened. You may choose to:

- Feature soloists other than those indicated.
- Extend solo sections; and/or
- Add introductions as is appropriate to this style of music.

However, you do not need to make these types of changes to have a successful recording—more is not necessarily better. You want to make choices that best showcase your band.

STUDENT & DIRECTOR ELIGIBILITY

The number of students listed on your application and attending the festival must not exceed 25. Students listed on the application must be the same as those who attend and perform at the Competition & Festival. There will be no exceptions.



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Festival dates are expanded in 2025, taking place Wednesday, May 7 through Sunday, May 11, 2025. Finalist bands must attend ALL festival activities, and all students must be in attendance at all Festival events. Students must be in grades 9–12, enrolled in high school through the 2024–25 school year, and between the ages of 13 and 19. If necessary to complete parts, up to two eighth grade students may be used. Dancers are not permitted to perform during the competition or final concert.

At the Competition & Festival in New York City, a maximum number of four (4) official chaperones (including the band director) are permitted to participate in each group. The four chaperones will be seated with the band during all Competition performances. Any additional adults traveling with the group must purchase tickets to attend public festival events.

Should you share a student(s) with another ensemble (i.e. they are in a community band as well as a high school band), and both ensembles are accepted, the student is only to appear with one ensemble and will need to choose which group they will perform with. If this scenario applies to you, please be sure to list a second performer on that student's instrument on your application in the event the student elects to perform with the other band. If a director submits two (2) applications for two (2) different ensembles, they must list an assistant or co-band director on both applications. No director may appear on stage more than once at the Competition & Festival. In the event that both ensembles are invited to compete, the director must select one (1) group which they will lead.

We want our finalists to accurately represent the greatest jazz bands across the United States and Canada, so both high school and community/conglomerate bands are eligible to submit an application. A conglomerate or community band is defined as an ensemble that is created to meet the educational needs of a specific community that follows a course of study and scope and sequence. These ensembles will have a weekly rehearsal/class schedule and a schedule of concerts that are publicly available throughout a school year or "season". All-star bands, all-region, and all-state bands are not eligible, nor are ensembles created specifically for the purpose of submitting to the *Essentially Ellington* Competition & Festival. JALC staff may require additional documentation regarding the status of a community band and an ensemble may be disqualified from the process at the discretion of our staff.



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SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION AND RECORDING

COMPLETE THE APPLICATION FORM AND UPLOAD YOUR RECORDING

You must fill out the entire application form online via Accept'd. You will not be permitted to submit your applications if any fields are left incomplete. Once you have created an account through Accept'd and begin an application, you will be prompted to upload your recordings. Please be sure to include appropriate recording information, including title, composer, personnel and soloists. Recordings will become property of Jazz at Lincoln Center.

NOTE: Sound files should be titled ONLY with the name of the piece being performed. Please DO NOT indicate your school or director on files names when uploading audio to Accept'd.

SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION

Submit recordings and application form through Accept'd.

All submissions must be submitted online by **11:59PM EST on Wednesday, December 18, 2024.**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How is my application scored?

Bands are judged in five categories—Soulfulness, Rhythm Section, Soloing/Improvisation, Interpretation and Basic Musicianship/Technique on a scale of 1 to 10. *Essentially Ellington* has created detailed adjudication rubrics, which provide a narrative of the scoring system used by our adjudicators and Festival judges. That document is available at jazz.org/ee under the [Competition and Festival tab](#).

What is the screening process?

All entries are judged in a two-part blind screening process by prominent jazz educators and musicians. Entries are initially evaluated by two adjudicators. The top scoring ensembles from each team of adjudicators will then move onto a second round of screening, conducted by all four of our application screeners. From these, we will select the 25 finalist bands to compete in the 2025 Competition & Festival. Five (5) international bands will be invited to participate in the event.

How and when will the finalists be announced?

The 30 finalist bands will be posted on the [EE website](#) on Wednesday, January 15, 2025.