

RULES – 2025 EDITION

Article 1 The Abu Dhabi International Competition for Composition (ADICC) is pleased to announce the launch of its upcoming competition, which will take place in the month of December 2025. The purpose of this competition is to select the contemporary works that will be performed at the 2026 Abu Dhabi Festival.

TIMETABLE

Article 2 15 September 2025	Application deadline
15–20 October 2025	Score evaluation by international jury
15 December 2025	Notification of selected laureates and finalists
1 February 2026	Orchestral material submission deadline for laureates
1 April 2026	Press announcement of winners
April 2026	Premiere and awards ceremony

Category One: Orchestral work

Category two: Solo instrument (Piano solo)

PART 1: APPLICATIONS

I. GENERAL CONDITIONS

Article 3 The work, which may take any form, must have a duration of approximately 10 minutes (for Category One) and 5 minutes (for Category two) and be written for symphony orchestra¹(category One) or solo instrument (category 2) based on the category for which the participant is applying.

The winning piece will be premiered during the Abu Dhabi Festival in April 2026, and the performance will be recorded.

Article 4 Scores must be submitted anonymously to the ADICC Secretariat, no later than 15 September 2025, as stipulated in Article 14 herein.

Article 5 The composer of the winning work will be informed personally and confidentially by December 2025 at the latest. The laureate must not disclose their identity or the composition's title prior to the official press announcement, nor engage in any communication related to the work unless expressly authorized by the ADICC Management.

Article 6 The winning composer is responsible for preparing and delivering the full orchestral material, along with the piano reduction of the score, no later than 1 February 2026. The ADICC Management will contact the composer in a confidential manner regarding these obligations.

Article 7 The winning work must remain undisclosed until the official press announcement on 1 April 2026. At that time, the composer's identity and the winning piece will be officially revealed to the press and the public.

Article 8 The laureates will be awarded the following prizes: AED 130,000 for First Prize, AED 50,000 for Second Prize, and AED 25,000 for Third Prize, each accompanied by a certificate. The winning work will be recorded and broadcast online. The laureate will be invited to Abu Dhabi, with travel and accommodation expenses fully covered by the ADICC, to:

- Attend rehearsals (date to be announced April 2026);
- Be introduced at a press conference (20 April 2026);
- Meet the orchestra conductor;
- Attend the awards ceremony (date to be announced 2026).

Article 9 Cession of Rights

¹ The orchestra must follow a traditional seating plan and must, in no case, exceed the following instrumentation:
WOODWINDS: 3 flutes (including the piccolo), 3 oboes (including the cor anglais), 3 clarinets (including the bass clarinet and/or the soprano clarinet), 3 bassoons (including the contrabassoon)
BRASS: 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 tuba
PERCUSSION: 4 players (or 1 timpanist and 3 percussionists)
HARP: 1 musician
CELESTA/GLOCKENSPIEL: 1 musician
STRINGS: 14 – 12 – 10 – 8 – 6

By participating in the competition, the winner agrees to cede, free of charge, the following rights to the ADICC:

- The exclusive rights for the world premiere performance of the winning work during the competition period;
- The authorization to record, reproduce, and distribute all competition-related performances of the winning work in formats such as CD, SACD, soundtrack, cassette, video disc, CD-ROM, DVD, minidisc, or any current or future medium;
- The permission to broadcast the performances publicly via any means, namely TV, radio, internet, satellite, cable, or any other medium, either in real time or as a recording, both in Belgium and outside its borders.

This transfer of rights is valid for a period of 50 years from the date the recording is made. The composer retains full entitlement to royalties generated from public performances, as collected by the relevant rights management organizations.

Article 10 Composers whose works have been selected for the final round will be notified no later than 15 December 2025.

In compliance with the confidentiality clause in Article 34, they must not reveal their identity or the composition's title until the press conference held directly ahead of the 2026 Abu Dhabi Festival opening.

Article 11 Candidates whose works are not selected for the final will be provided, in December 2025, with a list of the participating works by code name and an indication of the round each reached in the selection process. Composers who wish to retrieve their non-prize-winning works may do so upon written request, which must include the work's code name and a valid mailing address. Works will be returned after the Abu Dhabi Festival and no later than May 2026. After this date, the ADICC will not retain any unclaimed scores.

Article 12 The international jury is composed of experts appointed by the ADICC Executive Committee.

II. ACCEPTANCE AND REGISTRATION

Article 13 Eligibility is restricted to living composers born after 15 September 1975. The competition is open to composers of all nationalities, provided they have not previously been laureates in any past edition of the ADICC.

Article 14 Candidates must send their applications by registered post, bearing a postmark dated no later than midnight on 15 September 2025, to the following address: ADICC Secretariat – Level 3, Makeen Tower - 9th Street - Al Zahiyah - E16 - Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates). Applications submitted by fax or email will be disqualified.

Article 15 The application must contain the following documents:

- The orchestral score
- The soloist's score
- A sealed envelope that includes:
 - A completed application form, printed, signed, and downloaded from the ADICC's website.
 - Official documentation (original or certified copies) that attests to the candidate's nationality and birth details (date and place).
 - A short biography.
 - Audio file (Live or MIDI) labeled with your pseudonym and title of the piece.

Remarks:

- Incomplete applications will not be accepted.
- Scores will be submitted anonymously to the jury. Therefore, no identifying information should appear on the scores. Breach of this rule will lead to disqualification.
- Each composer must select a code name made up of letters and/or numbers only, which must appear clearly on every document submitted.
- Scores should be laser-printed and formatted on A3 paper whenever possible.

Article 16 Registration

All scores will be registered and assigned a number upon receipt. The full list of entries will then be provided to the Jury Secretary.

PART 2: COMPETITION PROCEDURES

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 17 The competition is conducted in four stages:

1. A preliminary screening aimed at selecting works that comply with the rules and meet the required artistic standards to be admitted into the competition.
2. A first round, in which a maximum of 20 works will be chosen to advance to the second round.
3. A second round, in which up to five works will be shortlisted for the final round.
4. A final round, during which the selected works are ranked, and the top three prizes are awarded.

Article 18 The competition will be held under the supervision of the Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Foundation (ADMAF).

II. PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

Article 19 The preliminary screening is intended to identify works that comply with the competition rules, especially in terms of orchestration and duration, and that display a satisfactory artistic level to qualify for competition entry. This initial selection is performed by the Artistic Committee prior to the competition.

Works eliminated at this stage for lacking sufficient artistic value will nevertheless still be accessible to the international jury members who may, at their discretion, review them on an individual basis. If one or more jury members, after individually reviewing the work, deem a work worthy of reconsideration for the first round, they may notify the Jury Secretary, and the work will be admitted to that round.

Article 20 If the number of works accepted into the first round is fewer than 20, the international jury may move directly to the second round.

III. FIRST ROUND

Article 21 During the first round, the jury will carry out an initial evaluation of all submitted works.

Article 22 The jury will then cast a secret vote to determine the 20 works to be admitted to the second round.

Article 23 For this purpose, each jury member will receive a ballot paper listing the code names and registration numbers of the competing works, arranged by registration order. Beside each code name, the jury member will indicate YES or NO to express their decision on the work's eligibility for the second round.

Ballot papers, once completed and signed, will be submitted to the Jury Secretary. The 20 works with the highest count of YES votes will move forward. If the 21st or any subsequent works tie in votes with the 20th, they will likewise be admitted. If the vote count reveals a significant gap in support, the total number of works advancing may be fewer than 20. In such cases, the final decision rests with the ADICC President (or their representative), in agreement with the Executive Committee.

Article 24 All signed ballot papers will be archived by the Jury Secretary as part of the official records.

IV. SECOND ROUND

Article 25 The second round serves to narrow down the first-round selections to those that will compete in the final round.

Article 26 Upon completing their individual assessments, the jury members may engage in a brief discussion on the technical aspects of the works prior to voting by secret ballot.

Article 27 Each jury member will receive a ballot paper listing the code names and registration numbers of the works admitted to this round, arranged by registration order. Jury members must assign a score between 50 and 100 points to each work. Any mark below 50 will be disregarded, and Article 38 will be enforced if applicable.

The score should reflect the members' overall assessment of the work, based on its compositional quality and the extent to which it allows the soloist to showcase their talent, in alignment with the competition's objectives (see Article 3). All signed ballot papers will be submitted to the Jury Secretary.

Article 28 The works will be ranked based on the cumulative points awarded by the jury members.

Article 29 If the difference in points between the fifth-ranked work and the one(s) ranked immediately above it is less than or equal to 1% of the fifth-ranked work's total score, those works will be treated as equally ranked.

This tie may also extend to higher-ranked works (above fifth place), in which case the lowest score among them will serve as the 1% reference point.

All works tied under these conditions may be admitted to the final round. Conversely, if a clear disparity in the number of votes received suggests that fewer than five works have strong majority support, the total number may be reduced accordingly.

In such cases, the decision will be made by the ADICC President, in agreement with the ministerial official.

V. FINAL ROUND

Article 30 The final vote is intended to rank the works that have reached the final stage and to designate the three prize winners.

Article 31 For this purpose, jury members will receive a ballot paper listing the code names and registration numbers of the finalist works, arranged by registration order.

Jury members must assign a score between 60 and 100 points to each work. Any mark below 60 will be disregarded, and Article 38 will be enforced if applicable. All signed ballot papers will then be submitted to the Jury Secretary.

Article 32 The finalist works will be ranked based on the cumulative points awarded by the jury members.

Article 33 Tie Situations and Voting Procedure

If the difference in points between a work and the one ranked immediately above it is less than or equal to 1% of the higher-ranked work's total score, those works will be treated as equally ranked. This tie may also extend to two or more higher-ranked works, in which case the lowest score among them will serve as the 1% reference.

In such cases, the jury shall decide the final ranking by simple majority, using a recorded vote. Each jury member will receive a ballot paper, stamped and signed by the Jury Secretary, and will indicate the code name of the work they believe deserves the higher ranking.

All signed ballot papers will be kept on record by the Jury Secretary.

This vote may be preceded by a discussion among the jury members regarding the technical aspects of the tied works.

If the tie persists after two consecutive rounds of voting, the works will be ranked according to the total points previously assigned. If the points are still equal, the ranking will be based on the second-round scores.

Article 34 Caveat

If any unforeseen circumstances arise that prevent the performance of the winning work, or if the laureate violates the confidentiality obligation by disclosing their identity or the composition's title before 1 April 2026, the ADICC Management reserves the right to award the prize to the second-ranked work. If similar issues affect this work as well, the award will be passed on to the next eligible work. Such decisions will be made only after consultation with the Legal Committee and under the supervision of the Jury Secretary.

VI. COUNTING OF VOTES

Article 35 The President of the Board is responsible for counting the ballot papers, each of which is submitted in a sealed envelope to the ministerial official. This process is carried out under the direct supervision of the ministerial official. Jury members are forbidden from entering the vote-counting room. Only the President of the Board and/or an appointed representative may be present during any of the jury's procedural operations. Ballot papers are sealed by the Jury Secretary and may be unsealed only with the consent of the Legal Committee.

Article 36 Any corrections made on a ballot paper must be initialled by both the jury member concerned and the Jury Secretary.

Article 37 If a ballot paper is deemed illegible or contains ambiguities that might affect accuracy, the Jury Secretary may ask the jury member concerned to submit a new one.

Article 38 If a jury member does not assign a score to a given work, the total score of that work will be recalculated as follows:

Add the average of the points given to that work by the remaining jury members to its total score, multiplied by the average of the scores assigned by the missing jury member to the other works, and divided by the average of the scores attributed to all works by the remaining jury members.

Article 39 All voting and score-counting procedures are strictly confidential. The jury will be notified only of:

- The list of works admitted to the second round, without any indication of ranking;
- The list of works admitted to the final round, without any indication of ranking;
- The final ranking of prize-winning works, identified exclusively by their code names.

Article 40 The ballot papers, duly signed by the jury members and subsequently sealed by the Jury Secretary, will be archived and preserved in the official competition records.

PART 3: PRIZES AND AWARDS

Article 41 The three laureates of the 2025 ADICC will be awarded the following monetary prizes: AED 130,000 for first place, AED 50,000 for second, and AED 25,000 for third.

These recognitions will be accompanied by official certificates to honor their excellence in the field of composition.

The laureates will be invited to attend the final round of the competition in Abu Dhabi, which will take place during April 2026 (with travel and accommodation expenses fully covered by the ADICC).

In the absence of a software-prepared version of the work, the ADICC will bear the costs of producing the orchestral material. This support is offered without prejudice to the composer's rights regarding rental payments for future performances.

The winning piece will be showcased by musicians and orchestras selected to perform at the 2026 Abu Dhabi Festival.

Article 42 Composers whose works reach the final stage will be officially designated as "Finalists."

PART 4: COMPETITION AUTHORITIES

I. JURY GUIDELINES

Article 43 The Competition Executive Committee holds exclusive authority over the appointment of jury members. Jurors, whose number is not predetermined, are selected on the basis of their international prominence in the music field, irrespective of racial, ideological, political, or linguistic factors. Jury composition may vary between competition rounds.

The jury panel for the 2025 edition will be announced in September 2015. The lineup remains subject to change.

Article 44 Unless explicitly stated otherwise, the jury is entrusted with the mission of ranking the submitted works in accordance with the procedures set forth in the relevant rules. The jury plays no administrative role.

Article 45 The execution of the jury's responsibilities will be overseen by a Chairperson appointed by the Competition Management, who will be supported by a Secretary. The Chairperson does not take part in the voting process.

Article 46 If a jury member becomes aware that one of their students has entered the competition, they must identify the work's code name and notify the Competition Management. The jury member in question should refrain from voting on the work, as per Article 38.

All jury members will be provided with the list of code names of the works accepted into the competition.

Article 47 Jury members are prohibited from participating in the competition as candidates.

Article 48 Each jury member must sign the competition rules and the official list of admitted works.

Article 49 Each jury member must provide the Competition Secretariat with the following declaration, duly signed:

I, the undersigned, serving on the jury of the Abu Dhabi International Competition for Composition (ADICC), hereby declare that I have read the competition rules. I acknowledge that the English version is legally binding in case of dispute. I agree to abide by the stated rules.

Furthermore, I confirm that the work registered under number... and code name... was submitted by one of my students.

Article 50 If the declaration referred to under Article 49 is found to be false, the signatory concerned will be excluded from the jury.

Article 51 Throughout the competition, jury members must refrain from making any statements regarding the submitted works, the jury's deliberations, or the organization of the competition, except during officially permitted discussions (as authorized by Articles 26 and 33).

³ Economy-class transportation by plane.

Article 52 Each round of the jury's deliberations shall be documented in a formal set of minutes, each covering one complete round. Two identical copies shall be prepared, read aloud at a jury meeting, and signed by all jury members and the Jury Secretary. At the end of the round, one copy shall be submitted to the ministerial official, while the second will be retained in the competition's archives.

Article 53 All jury votes shall be conducted by secret ballot.

Article 54 Under no circumstances may jury members disclose to one another the scores they have awarded to any of the works.

Article 55 The competition places emphasis on the independent personal judgment of each jury member. As such, members are strictly prohibited from engaging in any form of consultation, unless explicitly authorized (see Article 51). If a jury member identifies a rule violation in a submitted work, they must immediately notify the Jury Secretary.

Article 56 Jury members are restricted to evaluating the rounds for which they have been officially appointed. If a member is unable to attend one or more sessions for reasons beyond their control, the ADICC Management may either nullify the scores awarded by that member for the entire affected round or apply the provisions specified in Article 38.

If a work that was not evaluated by the absent member ends up tied with another in the same round, that member may not be authorized to participate in the tie-breaking vote.

II. LEGAL COMMITTEE

Article 57 A Legal Committee shall be established for each edition of the competition, composed of no fewer than three members. Its role is to resolve any administrative, civil, or disciplinary disputes that may arise between candidates, jury members, the Competition authorities, and the Executive Committee. The decisions issued by the Legal Committee are final and not subject to appeal.

Article 58 The Legal Committee members are appointed by the Executive Committee, which also designates one of them as Chairperson. If a dispute is brought before the Legal Committee, the Executive Committee shall appoint three of its members as arbitrators and form a board.

Article 59 The composition and responsibilities of the Legal Committee members will be communicated to the jury. By accepting their role, jury members acknowledge and accept the jurisdiction of the appointed arbitrators.

Article 60. The Chairperson of the Legal Committee shall appoint a Secretary to support the Committee's work.

Article 61 If an appointed arbitrator becomes unable to fulfill their duties, a replacement shall be designated by the Executive Committee as per Article 58. If this is not feasible, the remaining arbitrators shall name the substitute.

Article 62 All complaints or arbitration requests must be addressed directly to the Chairperson of the Legal Committee, with notification sent to the Competition organizers.

Article 63 A complaint shall be considered valid only if it explicitly specifies the individual(s) against whom it is directed.

III. COMPETITION MANAGEMENT

Article 64 The ADICC is a project initiated by ADMAF.

Article 65 The competition is administered by an Executive Committee, which is responsible for handling all administrative matters and representing ADMAF in legal and external affairs. This does not override specific responsibilities assigned to other bodies or authorities under these rules.

Article 66 The Executive Committee is also charged with ensuring the proper implementation of the rules. To this end, it may take any necessary measures to enforce compliance and safeguard the integrity and orderly conduct of the competition. In case of any breach, it holds the authority to conduct an investigation and escalate the issue to the Legal Committee.

Article 67 In the interest of managing administrative affairs, the Executive Committee may, at its own discretion and responsibility, delegate specific powers or duties to individuals not otherwise engaged in the competition.

IV. ARTISTIC COMMITTEE

Article 68 The Artistic Committee supports the Competition Management in all matters of a technical or artistic nature. It is responsible for evaluating submissions during the preliminary review phase and selecting those deemed suitable for admission to the competition. Artistic Committee members may also serve on the jury.

V. JURY SECRETARY

Article 69 The Jury Secretary, appointed by the Executive Committee, is entrusted with documenting all relevant proceedings and recording essential information throughout the competition. Furthermore, the Secretary is also tasked with opening the sealed envelopes to verify participants' ages. These details remain strictly confidential and are not to be disclosed to the jury members, under any circumstances.

VI. SANCTIONS

Article 70 The ADICC authorities may impose sanctions on jury members or candidates as follows:

- A reprimand
- An official warning
- A temporary exclusion from a given edition of the competition
- A permanent ban, which may entail:
 - Irrevocable exclusion from all present and future involvement in the competition and its affiliated events.
 - Forfeiture of all current and future benefits conferred by the competition.
 - Denial of access to all competition-related premises (such as offices, meeting rooms, concert halls, etc.), under the authority of the Competition Management.

Reprimands may be issued by the Executive Committee, and official warnings are the responsibility of the Chairperson of the Legal Committee. All remaining sanctions fall under the exclusive authority of the Legal Committee.

No other administrative body within the competition holds legal or disciplinary powers.

Article 71 In addition to the above-mentioned disciplinary actions, the Legal Committee, acting in coordination with the Executive Committee and in consultation with the Artistic Committee, may rule on any matter legitimately submitted to it. This encompasses the authority to impose penalties to cover the payment of damages and interest in favor of the aggrieved parties.

Article 72 Any composer who violates the obligation of absolute confidentiality regarding their identity or that of their winning work prior to the official announcement of the final results will forfeit all benefits associated with the competition. In this case, the second-place work will replace the disqualified work and declared the official winner.

Article 73 In the case of disputes, only the English version of these rules shall be deemed legally binding.

ABU DHABI INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION FOR COMPOSITION: RULES

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