

Terms of Participation

The “Terms of Participation” are the general set of rules that should be read closely by every group and solo artist interested in participating in vokal.total. They were made in order to establish a fair and reasonable basis for the competition to be held upon.

There are several regulations concerning topics like group size, repertoire, application material, financial deposit, nomination, cancelling, etc.

In case you decide to apply for the competition you have to confirm that you have read, fully understood and accept those rules.

This document is written in English and this is the only version that is valid for all participants. Even though we put a lot of effort into providing multilingual content to all of our visitors we want to avoid any ambiguities resulting from misinterpretation due to faulty translations.

Application Deadlines

vokal.total unplugged, vokal.total pure, vokal.total augmented

The application form must be completed and all the required materials uploaded to our website by December 15th (the year before the festival).

vokal.total mic'd choir

The application form must be completed and all the required materials uploaded to our website by November 1st (the year before the festival).

vokal.total beatbox battle

The Application form must be completed on our website by January 31st.

vokal.total loop battle

The Application form must be completed on our website by January 31st.

1. INITIATOR AND PATRONAGE OF VOKAL.TOTAL

The vokal.total International A Cappella Competition Graz is initiated and held by the nonprofit association

vokal.total
Graz, Austria

ZVR: 363263881

Landhausgasse 12/3
8010 Graz
AUSTRIA

and stands under the patronage of Mr. Ward Swingle (Famous A Cappella Composer and Arranger and the founder of “The Swingle Singers”) who has given his name to the Ward Swingle Awards.

2. DEFINITIONS

For the sake of clarity, we want to derive some definitions used later on in this text. The term “applicant” refers to a group or solo artist that is willing to participate at vokal.total and has handed in the required application. An applicant is not yet approved to actually take part in the competition. The term “participant” on the other hand refers to an applicant that has met all necessary requirements and is allowed to compete at vokal.total.

3. RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE

In the first place, the right to participate in vokal.total is preliminarily granted to all applicants that fulfill the specific requirements as employed by the defined categories (see section 5). In the second place, the actual participants will be chosen from the group of applicants by an expert panel to retain the quality of the competition.

4. FINANCIAL DEPOSIT

As we have encountered numerous unacceptable short-term cancellations by participants in the past, we feel forced to collect financial deposits. We want to stress that this deposit is not a participation fee and will be refunded entirely to the participating group or solo artist after the competition (in ALL categories the group has been selected for) – taking part in vokal.total remains free of charge! The amount of the deposit has been set to € 200,- and has to be transferred by means of money transfer on our bank account. The deadline to receive the applicant's money is seven workdays after the applicant's approval to the competition has been announced. (Exception of the rule are Solo Artists in the Categories vokal.total beatbox battle and vokal.total loop battle)

5. APPLICATION AND CATEGORIES

The International A Cappella Competition vokal.total is held in the following categories: vokal.total unplugged, vokal.total pure, vokal.total augmented, vokal.total mic'd choir, vokal.total beatbox battle, vokal.total loop battle. Each category has individual requirements as described below. Applicants can sign up for one or more categories but the decision, whether an applicant may start in a certain category still remains with the organizer. The time window to apply starts with the public announcement on our website www.vokaltotal.at and ends, if not declared otherwise, at least two months before the beginning of the competition.

5.1. GENERAL LIMITATIONS

Participants are allowed to bring their own technical equipment in accordance with our technical director.

As vokal.total is held as an A Cappella Competition we want to stress that no instruments are allowed performing on stage except for very basic percussion.

In some categories we do allow effect and loop devices, though, as long as the input signal can still be determined to be nothing but a singer's live voice. Prerecorded audio samples are not allowed.

With our competition we aim to entertain the audience and through a respectful,

yet playful competitive spirit inspire the A Cappella world to achieve new levels of artistry, technical excellence, creativity, passion and friendship. It is an annual meeting of the A Cappella scene in Graz where so many A Cappella enthusiasts meet, so that everyone should feel the spirit of community over competition. We like to represent diversity and the joy of music.

5.2. REQUIRED MATERIAL FOR THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants have to present themselves in representative audio and/or video material (Applicants for the beatbox battle and loop battle see also section 5.7 and 5.8). A recording of a rehearsal or a concert is preferred and the audio signal must not be edited or manipulated. While audio is mandatory and shall be of highest quality possible and not edited (uncompressed PCM audio or mp3/aac/ogg of bit rates higher 256kbps) the video material should represent the applicant while performing live on stage. If no such recording is available a similar audio recording may be handed in.

For promotional purposes we need two high quality photos (JPG or TIFF format; 300dpi, b/w or colour, defined in CMYK or RGB) of the group that shows the spirit and the character of the ensemble. The applicants must concede the unlimited usage rights to vokal.total.

As additional information for the expert panel and to correctly promote the applicants in case of participating at the competition we need a curriculum vitae/description of the group or individual artist. No more than 400 words, maximum 1 page as PDF (needs to be uploaded until the end of the application deadline). Means of submission are via upload on our home page or link to an external download source.

If an applicant decides to apply for more than one category, it is necessary to hand in individual material for each category that fulfils the individual requirements and the performance praxis.

We need a scan or a photo copy of the passport of every single applicant. In the category vokal.total mic'd choir we only need the passport of the group leader.

5.3. VOKAL.TOTAL UNPLUGGED

- The number of ensemble members must not exceed 12 people
- Male, female as well as mixed ensembles are accepted, no age limit
- No microphones are allowed, since the competition takes place in a classical concert hall (Minoriten Saal)
- There are no restrictions in musical genre or language but the repertoire needs to be chosen according to the performance praxis
- The duration of the performance is limited to 25 minutes
- We encourage groups to present their own arrangements and compositions but interpretations of existing material are welcomed equally
- The Jury will assess musical quality as well as originality, arrangements, lyrics, audience appeal and stage performance

5.4. VOKAL.TOTAL PURE

- The number of ensemble members must not exceed 12 people
- Male, female as well as mixed ensembles are accepted, no age limit
- Performing on stage at vokal.total (Dom im Berg) has to be done using handheld microphones
- There are no restrictions in musical genre or language but the repertoire needs to be chosen according to the performance praxis
- Although the voices are processed, it must be the aim of the sound engineer at all times, that the voices sound natural and “pure”
- Special Effects (as octaver, distortion, echoes, chorus/doubling effects, loops etc.) are not allowed
- The duration of the performance is limited to 25 minutes

- We encourage groups to present their own arrangements and compositions but interpretations of existing material are welcomed equally
- The Jury will assess musical quality as well as originality, arrangements, lyrics, audience appeal and stage performance

5.5. VOKAL.TOTAL AUGMENTED

- The number of ensemble members must not exceed 12 people
- Male, female as well as mixed ensembles are accepted, no age limit
- Performing on stage at vokal.total (Dom im Berg) has to be done using handheld microphones
- There are no restrictions in musical genre or language but the repertoire needs to be chosen according to the performance praxis
- This category requires a delicate use of various tools of a sound designer
- Special Effects (as octaver, distortion, echoes, chorus/doubling effects, loops etc.) are encouraged, although prerecorded audio samples are not allowed
- The duration of the performance is limited to 25 minutes
- We encourage groups to present their own arrangements and compositions but interpretations of existing material are welcomed equally
- The Jury will assess musical quality, originality, arrangements, lyrics, audience appeal and stage performance, as well as the creative use of “special effects”

5.6. VOKAL.TOTAL MIC'DCHOIR

- The number of choir members must exceed 12 people, but is limited by the capabilities of the stage at “Dom im Berg”
- Male, female as well as mixed choirs are accepted, no age limit

- Performing on stage at vokal.total (Dom im Berg) has to be done using handheld microphones
- There are no restrictions in musical genre or language but the repertoire needs to be chosen according to the performance praxis
- The duration of the performance is limited to 25 minutes
- We encourage groups to present their own arrangements and compositions but interpretations of existing material are welcomed equally
- The Jury will assess musical quality as well as originality, arrangements, lyrics, audience appeal and stage performance

5.7 VOKAL.TOTAL BEATBOX BATTLE

- Participants: only solo beatboxers can compete; no beatbox groups or crews. There will be a total of 8 participants competing in the battle
- Selection Process: An expert panel will choose who competes in the battle by invitation
- Wildcard Option: Occasionally, there may be 1 or 2 wildcard spots. If wildcards are allowed, this will be announced on all vokal.total social media platforms, with instructions on how to apply
- Age Limit: There is no age restriction for participants
- Equipment: Microphones will be provided by the venue
- Performance Style: You can perform any musical genre or language, but it should be suited for live performance
- Tournament Format: The competition follows a single elimination format

- **Order of Performance:** The starting order will be assigned randomly at the competition
- **Battle Rounds (ABBA System):**
 - For the Quarterfinal, Semifinal, Small Final, and Grand Final rounds, we use the ABBA format.
 - Round Structure: Contestant A performs for 90 seconds, followed by Contestant B for 90 seconds.
 - The jury scores this round, awarding one point per member.
 - Next, Contestant B starts with 90 seconds, followed by Contestant A with 90 seconds.
 - The jury scores again, and the scores are added to the first round.
 - In case of a draw, each contestant gets another 90 seconds.
- **Judging Criteria:** The jury will evaluate contestants on: Musical quality, originality, audience appeal, stage performance and technicality
- **Prizes:** This Beatbox Battle is separate from the Ward Swingle Award. Details about prize money will be shared when the registration opens.

5.8 VOKAL.TOTAL LOOP BATTLE

- **Participants:** Only solo performers using a looping device can enter; no groups or teams are allowed. There will be a total of 5 participants competing in the battle.
- **Age Limit:** There is no age restriction for participants
- **Equipment:** Participants must bring their own looping equipment. Single device (RC 505 MK1 or MK2)
- **Special Effects** (as octaver, distortion, echoes, chorus/doubling effects, looping, etc.) are allowed
- **Selection Process:** An expert panel will select the participants each year.

- **Wildcard Option:** Occasionally, there may be 1 or 2 wildcard spots. If wildcards are allowed, this will be announced on all vokal.total social media platforms, with instructions on how to apply
- **Tournament Format:** The competition is an elimination tournament with 5 participants. Each round, every participant will perform, and one participant will be disqualified until only one winner remains
- **Order of Performance:** The starting order will be assigned randomly shortly before the competition
- **Battle Rounds:**
 - Each participant has a maximum of 4 minutes to perform per round. Using the full 4 minutes is not required; quality of performance is more important than filling time
 - After each round, one participant will be eliminated based on votes from the jury
- **Judging Criteria:** The jury will assess musical quality as well as originality, arrangements, possibly but not necessarily lyrics, audience appeal, stage performance and technicality
- **Prizes:** This Loop Battle is separate from the Ward Swingle Award. Details about prize money will be shared when the registration opens.

5.9. ADDITIONAL NOTES

- **No “rotations” are allowed:** a group participating at vokal.total must not exchange singers throughout the contest even if competing in different categories. In this case the group could apply as two groups instead – there are no limitations regarding “overlapping casts”. Allowed though is performing songs in reduced ensemble size if e.g. a score is designed for a certain cast
- **If a participant competes in different categories the repertoire must also differ according to the category definitions and requirements. Only one song may be performed in two or more categories**
- **Please note that published choral or ensemble compositions may only be sung using the original scores or authorized copies**

6. NOMINATION, REJECTION AND RETREAT

Nomination of participants is done for every single applicant and category on basis of the supplied materials as mentioned in section 5.2. The executive body is an expert panel that chooses participants from the applicants according to their musical adequacy in order to ensure the quality of the competition. Thereby the organizer retains the right to either

1. reject a group's application from single categories,
2. suggest a change of category in which a group applies to compete if another than the desired category matches the panels impression of the applicant better, or
3. exclude an applicant entirely from the competition without justification.

After the end of the application time window every group will receive notice if and in which categories it is invited to compete at vokal.total. In case a participant retreats or does not appear at the competition date(s), the deposit will not be refunded.

7. TRANSPORT AND ACCOMMODATION

vokal.total is not capable of bearing any costs of transportation or accommodation for its participants. Usually though, we can help with looking for group accommodation if needed. We make exceptions for contestants of the beatbox battle.

8. PROCEDURE AT THE COMPETITION VOKAL.TOTAL

The performances of the participants are structured by the categories. The actual performance times are random but influenced by factors like arrival times, sound check times or other temporal aspects. There is no legitimate objection against the elaborated time table. In severe cases of scheduling conflicts, the organizer can attempt to rearrange the time table on short notice and commits to inform all

affected participants in sufficient time.

A list of songs (setlist) that are going to be performed has to be sent to vokal.total at latest five workdays before the competition. The songs need to be listed in the order of the performance and the following information has to be included: Songwriter/Composer, Arranger (Please indicate if it is an original composition or the arrangement was made by a group member).

Before each performance all participants have the possibility to prepare for the show at a small cave in the Grazer Schloßberg, but they are obligated to return to the venue at least 25 minutes before their scheduled appearance on stage as long as not announced differently by the organizer.

The duration of the performance is limited including entry and exit. Any overtime will be fined by the jury.

All winners of a Ward Swingle Award (see section 9.1), the Champion of the beatbox battle, and the Winner of the loop battle are obliged to perform at the Winners Concert of vokal.total.

There are no rewards designated for any performances in the course of the competition or the Winners Concert.

Per group and choir, up to 12 participating singers are allowed to attend the competitions (which they are not taking part in) for free. Additional singers need to purchase tickets.

All participants will get 50% off the open workshops.

Additionally, if you would like to attend the vokal.total winners concert you need to buy your tickets through our website. Since winning groups certainly do not have to pay for singing at the concert, already bought standing room tickets will be refunded, whereas seated tickets cannot be paid back.

9. AWARDING OF PRIZES

In the course of the competition different kinds of awards are given to participants:

9.1. THE WARD SWINGLE AWARD

The winner of the Ward Swingle Award is nominated by our jury. They also decide upon the awarding of the bronze, silver, and gold diplomas. The Ward Swingle Award in 1st Prize is remunerated with € 2000,- and may be paid out to the winner of the first prize after the Winners Concert in cash or by money transfer. If the winning group cannot attend the Winners Concert, they will get no prize money. The organizer withholds the right to delay the payment without reason for up to 6 weeks. Excepted of this award are the beatbox battle and loop battle. Please also read section 13. TAXES.

9.2. THE AUDIENCE AWARD

The winner of the Audience Award is chosen by the audience at the end of a competition via live voting.

There is no prize money for the Audience Award. There is no Audience Award at the beatbox battle nor the loop battle.

9.3. SPECIAL AWARDS

The jury are at liberty to bestow special awards to participants such as for outstanding performance, arrangements, soli or similar. There are no monetary or material prizes for this kind of award. Any special award is given upon initiative of the jury and is not an integral part of the Ward Swingle Awards.

9.4. MATERIAL AND OTHER PRIZES

Due to sponsoring agreements we can offer material or other prizes in some cases. As these agreements are not stringent for both parties vokal.total cannot be held liable for any shortcomings or retreats of our sponsoring partners.

10. OUT OF GRAZ

All participants are given the possibility to apply for extra shows in the temporal and local vicinity of the competition. The selection of the actually performing groups is exclusively up to the local organizers. vokal.total will provide the fees for

the artists. Occasions and payment can vary from year to year and will be communicated shortly before the competition. Hosting at the venue (catering, etc.) as well as all technical stage and PA equipment have to be provided by the local organizer and cannot be invoked from vokal.total.

11. THE MENTORING SYSTEM AND FEEDBACK WORKSHOPS

The participants of the Ensemble Categories vokal.total unplugged, vokal.total pure, and vokal.total augmented get a member of the jury assigned as their personal mentor. In the beginning of the vokal.total week each group gets a 45 minutes coaching with their mentor. There will be a possibility to get oral feedback from the jury after the competitions.

The participants of the vokal.total beatbox battle get to spend a lot of time with the jury during festival and will have the chance to talk to the members for personal feedback.

The participants of the vokal.total loop battle get a chance to talk to the members of the jury after the competition in an informal meet&greet after the competition.

Generally, taking part at these private coaching and feedback workshops is free of charge for participants. There is no general public allowed.

Overall, we ask to respect the decision of the jury, which has been made after careful consideration and discussion of many factors. We kindly ask you to keep an open mind and a willingness to learn and grow upon the feedback you will receive. After everything, we all want to spend a good time together in Graz and enjoy each other's music, company and possibly see this festival as a source of motivation and inspiration.

12. LEGAL ISSUES

The participant declares that vokal.total is the only owner of audio and video rights of material recorded during the course of vokal.total. In addition, all participants commit the rights for the audio and video material submitted in the course of the application to vokal.total for further reproduction and sale by the organizer.

vokal.total does not take any responsibility for any damages, losses or other

harmful events that affects participants (persons) or their belongings.

Every person and their goods take part at vokal.total on their own risk.

This includes all associated events, preparation and traveling.

We cannot engage in correspondence on the competition, and the jury's decisions are final.

There is no recourse to legal action.

13. TAXES

Every participant receiving money from vokal.total (through prize money or similar) needs to take care of their own taxes. If participants do not have their main residence in Austria the following options are effective:

a.) If a participant attests that they did not earn more than € 2000,- in Austria in the year of the competition, we do not keep any kind of taxes. (Prize money can be split amongst all the group members)

b.) If a participant has earned more than € 2000,- in Austria in the year of the competition, we need to either:

1.) forward 20% of all the earnings, or

2.) forward 25% from all the earnings after subtracting all travel expenses

to the Austrian tax office.

14. STAGE RIDER

The stage at Dom im Berg is 8 meters wide and 3,2 meters deep. Monitors will be put on the front edge of the stage.

The stage at Minoritensaal has three steps. The lowest and first platform is approximately 6 meters wide and 2 meters deep. The following are each 1 meter in depth.

If more detailed information is necessary please contact our hosting team.

15. MISCELLANEOUS

Reserved

16. DATE OF ISSUE

November 1st, 2014

Revised January 1st, 2017

Revised November 24th, 2017

Revised November 23rd, 2019

Revised November 13th, 2023

Revised November 24th, 2024

Revised September 5th, 2025

17. CONTACT AND BANKING

vokal.total – International A Cappella Competition Graz

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Bank: Steiermärkische Sparkasse

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