



APRIL 10 – 12, 2026

Presented by the Tucson Kitchen Musicians Association

STEFAN GEORGE MEMORIAL SONGWRITING COMPETITION

CONTACT: Tucson Folk Festival Songwriting Competition Coordinator – Jonathan Frahm,
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SONGWRITING COMPETITION IMPORTANT FACTS

Hello Songwriters! Thank you for your interest in entering the annual Tucson Folk Festival Songwriting Competition, named in honor of long-time festival contributor and performer, Stefan George. It is a great opportunity to advance your songwriting knowledge, hone your skills and be recognized for your work. Here is a quick breakdown of the important information you will need to enter.

The competition is part of the acoustic oriented Tucson Folk Festival. It is open to the public. All ages and folk music styles are welcome to apply EXCEPT:

- Paid performers at this year's Annual Tucson Folk Festival
- Artists that are under contract with a major record label
- First-place winners from a previous Tucson Folk Festival Songwriting Competition
- Tucson Folk Festival Songwriting Competition Judges or Selection Committee Members

All applications will be reviewed by a group of music professionals, resulting in the selection of a group of 8 finalists and 6 alternates. The finalists will then

move on to the Live Performance part of the competition, where the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place positions will be awarded prizes and recognized at the Tucson Folk Festival.

Only original songs are eligible for this competition. If you have a co-writer(s) who will not be performing with you, they must provide TKMA a letter giving their permission for you to perform without them and accept on their behalf any prizes awarded to your co-written songs in this competition.

Songs must be appropriate and suitable for a family-style folk festival.

You must be able to provide mp3 or wav recordings of two original songs (phone or home recordings are accepted). Please review the “Sound Recording Rules” below for a more detailed explanation of the recording and submission rules. 2

You must also be willing to perform your songs in a live performance setting. Finalists will perform your songs at the Songwriting Competition before a live audience and a panel of music performance judges. **This year, the Songwriting Competition will serve as the kick-off concert for on-site Tucson Folk Festival programming on Friday, April 10 at Jacome Plaza.** The concert is open to the public and free to attend.

If you are chosen as a finalist, you may perform solo or with a maximum of ONE accompanist on stage with you. Your accompanist may not be paid entertainers of the Tucson Folk Festival.

The First Place and Second Place Winners will then perform on Jacome Plaza Stage at 6:00 pm on the Saturday of the Festival. The Second Place Winner Set will be 15 minutes, followed by the First Place Winner Set of 30 minutes.

Judging decisions are final. If, for any reason, a finalist is unable to attend the Live Performance portion of the competition, the judges will replace the finalist with one of the alternates.

[Jacome Plaza Info and Area Map \(hotlink\)](#)

[Festival Site Map \(hotlink\)](#)

Prizes

- **First Place:** \$300 Cash Award, Free Registration to Folk Alliance International Conference, TKMA T-Shirt, Bookmans Gift Card, 30 minute set on the Jacome Plaza Stage on Saturday at 6:15 pm
- **Second Place:** \$150 Cash Award, Bookmans Gift Card, TKMA T-Shirt, 15 minute set on the Jacome Plaza Stage on Saturday at 6 PM
- **Third Place:** \$50 Cash Award, TKMA T-Shirt, Bookmans Gift Card

APPLICATION INFORMATION

All applications must be submitted online, using the form provided. There is a \$30.00 non- refundable application fee for all submissions.

[APPLY HERE](#) (hotlink)

NOTE: After providing and confirming your email address, you will gain access to the Application Form. There are 3 key steps to complete your application: (1) Complete Contact Information, (2) Pay Application Fee and (3) Complete 2 Demo Uploads.

As these 3 steps are completed, the application will indicate that and tell you when all is complete. 3

Important Dates

- **October 1, 2025** Application Acceptance Opens
- **December 1, 2025** Application Acceptance Closes
- **February 5, 2026** Songwriting Contest Finalists Announced
- **February 19, 2026** Deadline for Finalist Commitment Participate
- **Friday April 10, 2026** Songwriting Competition Finals

(Live Performances at Jacome Plaza Stage)

- **Saturday April 11, 2025** First and Second Place Winners Perform on Jacome Plaza Stage

Songwriting Demos and Recordings

Uploaded recordings must be in mp3 type format. CDs and tapes are not accepted. Please upload 2 original songs. These songs must not be from a previous release from any major label. Acts are also encouraged to add links to a video (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo). Videos will be considered in selection decisions. Applicants must also upload a PDF or word document for the lyrics of each submission.

- **DO NOT UPLOAD VIDEO FILES! SUBMIT VIDEO URL LINK ONLY**
- Guide to producing audio and video recordings are provided here:

[Audio Recording Guide](#) [Video Recording Guide](#)

Finalists will be allowed to perform the songs submitted on the uploaded demos or may perform any new or different original song for the Live Performance part of the competition, but in either case, all TKMA rules and guidelines apply.

A finalist's Live Performance time will be limited to 12 minutes on stage. This is done to help maximize the greatest number of finalists for this event. This is generally enough time for a quick instrument setup and the performance of three songs with short introductions. No sound check is possible. This procedure will be addressed and coordinated closely with each individual Songwriting to ensure they have enough time to present their music.

Judging Overview

The selection of Judges may include: fellow musicians, people involved in the music industry, festival headliners, past contest winners, local poets, music scholars, writers and recording engineers.

- **Submitted Songs are Judged on:**
 - Originality, Uniqueness and Authenticity

- Melody, Harmony and Rhythmic Quality
- Song Structure and Arrangement
- Artist's Emotional Commitment
- *Please note: The recording quality of the submissions is not a part of the judging.*
- **Your Live Performance is Judged on:**
 - *All listed above categories and:*
 - Stage Presence, Confidence, Talent
 - Grace under Pressure, Preparedness, Audience Connection.

FAQs

- **Live Performance Musical Instrument Allowances** - All “hand-carry sized” acoustic musical instruments are allowed in the competition. In addition to hand- carry sized instruments, electric basses, electronic pianos, pre-assembled pedal boards, pedal steel guitars small harmonica amps, percussion instruments of allkinds, including small drum kits are also allowed.
- **Live Performance Musical Instrument Restrictions** - Large drum kits, drum machines, backing tracks, vocal harmonizers, and multiple guitar pedal set-ups.
- **Live Performance Instrument Exceptions** - Exceptions may be granted on an individual basis if you have a question about an instrument not listed above. Please email the Tucson Folk Festival Performer Coordinator listed at the beginning of this document.
- **Is Your Music “Folk Music”?** - We define folk music as music played on hand-held and hand-carry sized acoustic instruments, e.g., guitars, vihuelas, banjos, mandolins, jarana, gitaron, brass instruments, standup

bass, fiddles, flutes, accordions, bongos, djembes, congas, the list goes on ... If your instrument is found in Old or New World music styles which include, European Ballads, American folk & blues, indie folk, bluegrass, cajun, new-rass, waila, chicken scratch, Mexican folk, flamenco, Native American flute, or cowboy ballads, you are a folk musician by our definition. If your original music was influenced by any of these styles – your original music is welcome to apply, as well.

- **When will the Songwriting Competition Finals take place? The Songwriting Competition will be held Friday, April 10, 2026 at the Jacome Plaza Stage, 6 PM – 9 PM.**
- **What are the Live Performance Setup Guidelines?** Live performance information will be provided in detail to all finalists well in advance of their performance. A few general details: The finals will take place on our Jacome Plaza stage with a professional sound system, sound engineers, covered stage and approximately 400 people in attendance. The stage will have D.I. Boxes, Vocal and instrument Mics, and Monitors. We do not provide instrument or music stands, or other special performance equipment. 5 minutes is the standard time allotted to each performer for setup, and then a 10-15 minute performance (2 songs). A professional video company will record the finals and we will upload them to the Folk Festival youtube channel for free viewing after the event.
- **If I'm a Finalist, can I sell CDs at the Event?** Songwriting Competition Finalists may sell their CDs on consignment through the TKMA Kitchen Store at the Festival and are typically priced at \$15, but you can price your CDs as you wish. TKMA commission on CDs is \$2 per CD (any price). TKMA commission on download cards is \$1 per \$5 card and \$2 per \$10 or higher card. Further details on consignment will be sent after selection notification. Songwriting Competition Finalists may also sell CD's at the TKMA table near their stage after their set, provided the contestant or a

designee is at the table. **TKMA Table Volunteers will NOT handle money for your CD's other than at the Kitchen Store in Jacome Plaza.**

ADDITIONAL FESTIVAL OPPORTUNITIES

Festival Performer:

- If you would like to be a Festival Performer, separate and apart from the Songwriting Competition, please read the Performer Information Fact Sheet at the link below. Three song demos in mp3 format are required and can be the same or different from your Songwriting Competition demos.
- Performer Applications are FREE until October 31, after which there is a separate non-refundable application fee of \$30.00 for late applicants. Performer application acceptance closes November 15.
- **See Performer Application Info Here: [Festival Applications \(hotlink\)](#)**

TKMA Membership:

- You are not required to be a TKMA Member to apply for the Songwriting Competition or to be a Festival Performer, but we encourage you to become a Member! Annual memberships are the best way to keep our festival going and stay free to the public. We're proud to be one of the oldest FREE folk music festivals in the country!
- **Become a Member Here: [TKMA Membership Info \(hotlink\)](#)**

Ballad Tree:

- A tradition here and at other festivals, the Ballad Tree offers musicians an informal setting to present songs in a round robin format (song circle). It could be a tune you just wrote or a song you learned from your grandfather 40 years ago. The Ballad Tree welcomes beginners and master players – we encourage all acoustic instrument players, singers, poets, storytellers and listeners to stop by and share in our Song Circle. No signups are required, just come on over with your instruments. All attendees are welcome.

Workshops:

- Sharing your knowledge with others makes the festival even more rewarding. If you have a topic you would like to teach in a 45-60 minute workshop, enter your topic in the field under **Other Opportunities** and we will contact you. Acceptance as a Songwriting Contestant or Festival Performer is not required. All attendees are welcome.

Volunteer Activities:

- If you are interested in volunteering at the Festival (in addition to performing) or participating in any of our pre-festival activities, we can use your help! It takes over 200 volunteers to put on the festival every year.
- Volunteer jobs include working in the TKMA Kitchen Store, Beer Garden, Water/Soda and Raffle Booths, Volunteer Tent, Children's Area and/or acting as Emcee, Stage Manager/Asst. Manager and/or general roustabout! Volunteer opportunities will be posted on our website after January 15.
- Pre-festival volunteer opportunities include helping with fundraisers, publicity, selling program ads, soliciting sponsorships and vendors and lining up raffle prizes.
- **Sign Up to Volunteer Here: [Volunteer Mail List \(hotlink\)](#)**

The Tucson Kitchen Musicians Association (TKMA) is an all-volunteer operated 501(c)(3) non-profit organization; established in 1986. Our mission is to further public awareness and interest in acoustic music and other folk arts by promoting and producing the annual Tucson Folk Festival; one of the oldest FREE folk music festivals in the country! www.tucsonfolkfest.org and <https://www.facebook.com/TucsonFolkFest>