

HANSE GUITAR CUP

*Young talent competition in the neighborhood branches of
Hamburger Sparkasse and at the Hamburg Guitar Festival*



Announcement 2026

Promoting young artistic talent is an important focus of GitarreHamburg. Particularly in the popular series "Neue Szene" and "Gitarrentage in the Instituto Cervantes," young artists are offered exciting podiums at the Hamburg Gitarrentage every year.

In 2022, GitarreHamburg took things a step further and - supported by the Haspa Musik Stiftung, by hosting an international young talent competition for the first time. In 2024, the competition entered a new round under the name "**HANSE GUITAR CUP**." Now, the third round of the competition is starting. The competition aims to give young artists the opportunity to prove themselves in front of the most important jury - the audience. After an application round, 12 young guitarists will compete from October 19 to 24, 2026, in a tournament-style format in six different neighborhood branches of HASPA, with three finalists in two categories each. The final will take place on November 7 and 8, 2026, on the stage of the Hamburger Gitarrenfestival. The winners of the competition will receive, for example, an engagement at the Hamburger Gitarrentage 2027 and other attractive prizes.

Admission to all competition concerts is free.

Call for participation: The "**HANSE GUITAR CUP**" is a performative competition. In three phases, you as a participant will prove that you are capable of facing the reality you will encounter as a performing artist in the future. In the first phase, "Acquisition," you must convince the booking team of the Hamburger Gitarrentage with a strong application to be admitted to the preliminary round in one of the six neighborhood branches of HASPA. There, you must demonstrate your qualities on the "small stage" and convince the audience with your stage presence. Only the audience decides who qualifies for the final round. At the final on the Hamburger Gitarrenfestival, you will finally show that you can also perform on the "big stage." Exciting prizes await you in the end, which will help you take the next steps as a professional musician.

Competition Phases

1. Application Process:

Soloists - aged between 16-29 years old, apply for participation in one of the two competition categories "Concert Guitar" and "Popular Guitar Styles" (including Fingerstyle, Blues, Jazz, South American Guitar Music, Flamenco, among others).

- Only instrumental compositions will be considered.
- All applicants apply with an online registration on our website, a photo, a CV, a brief description of the program, a video sample, and possibly other materials they believe can convince the booking team.
- Please send all application documents to info@hanseguitarcup.de by July 21, 2026 (11:59 PM) or by September 15, 2026 (11:59 PM).
- The first 6 semi-finalists will be selected from the applications received by July 21, 2026. All applicants not considered in this initial selection will remain in the selection process. From these and the applications received by September 15, 2026, another 6 semi-finalists will be selected. An early application thus increases the chance of progressing. (Further information below under "Conditions of Participation")

Application Deadline 1: July 21, 2026, at 11:59 PM

Application Deadline 2: September 15, 2026, at 11:59 PM

NEW: This year, there will be a blacklist of pieces from the previous edition of the HANSE GUITAR CUP that may not be performed this year (see conditions of Participation).

2. Preliminary round

- The preliminary round will take place from October 19 to 24, 2026, in six neighborhood branches of HASPA (Hamburger Sparkasse).
- Two players in each category will compete against each other with a 30 -minute program of their choice (s. Blacklist).
- The order will be drawn.
- The audience will decide by voting which participant advances to the final.
- For the performance, we offer minimal technical equipment. Participants can choose between a purely acoustic performance or slight amplification using an AER acoustic amplifier. The equipment will be provided by GitarreHamburg.
- All participants who have to travel more than 50 km will receive a reimbursement of €150 for travel and accommodation expenses.

3. Final:

- The finals of both categories will take place on November 7 and 8, 2026, at the 12th Hamburger Gitarrenfestival.
- All finalists will present a 20-minute program of their choice (s. Blacklist).
- The order of performance will also be drawn.
- Once again, only the audience (through voting) will decide on the awarding of prizes.
- In this round, the technical requests of the finalists can be accommodated in consultation with the technical team of the Hamburger Gitarrentage, as the stage equipment of the festival can be used.
- All participants who have to travel more than 50 km will receive a reimbursement of €150 for travel and accommodation expenses.

4. Awards and Special Prize:

- The winners of the HANSE GUITAR CUP in both categories will each receive an engagement at the Hamburger Gitarrentage 2027 and a fee of €1000 (including travel costs).
- The runners-up will each receive an engagement for our "Neue Szene" series with a fee of €500 and a travel allowance.
- The first-place winner in the "Concert Guitar" category will win a guitar from the guitar maker Michael Wichmann.
- D'Addario Prize Boxes for all finalists: All finalists of the HANSE GUITAR CUP will receive "Prize Boxes" from the string and accessory manufacturer D'Addario.
- In addition, as in 2022 and 2024, there will be further attractive prizes available from various prize donors.

Special Prize "**Composition**": A targeted application is required for the special prize "Composition" - appropriate selection in the online registration form. The participant with the best original composition of the competition wins a publication of the piece in the renowned publisher "Acoustic Music Books". It is also possible to apply with a new, previously unpublished composition by another composer. In this case, the composer wins the publication of the composition in the publisher "Acoustic Music Books".

Conditions of Participation:

- Employees of GitarreHamburg, as well as members of the JugendGitarrenOrchester-Hamburg, are **NOT** eligible to participate in the competition
- Participation is only possible between the ages of 16 and 29.
- The organizer does not charge any registration fees. Participation is free! Participants who have to travel more than 50 kilometers will receive a flat rate of €150 each for travel and accommodation expenses for participating in the preliminary round and the final.
- The selection of applicants admitted to the competition is determined by the booking team of GitarreHamburg. The decision is final and binding, and recourse to legal action is excluded.
- The HANSE GUITAR CUP is extensively advertised publicly. However, to ensure fairness, which participants will perform in which HASPA branch will be kept secret until the respective semi-final. Participants also commit to strict confidentiality and may only indicate in general terms that they will participate in the semi-final of the HANSE GUITAR CUP from October 19 to 24, 2026.
- The decision on which applicant advances to the final is exclusively determined by the audience through voting by placing a ballot in a collection box. The participant with the most votes advances to the final. In the event of a tie, the decision lies with the competition management. The decision is final and binding, and recourse to legal action is excluded.
- The decision on the rankings in the final is exclusively determined by the audience through voting by placing a ballot in a collection box. The ranking order corresponds to the number of votes. In the event of a tie, the decision lies with the competition management. The decision is final and binding, and recourse to legal action is excluded.
- Applicants are required to actively participate in the preliminary round and final if they qualify.
- The organizer reserves the right to record the evaluation performances and the final concert and to publish them in audio and video. Participants cannot claim any rights from this.
- **Special Prize "Composition":** A targeted application is required for the special prize "Composition" - appropriate selection in the online registration form. **A video recording of the composition can be submitted (file or link). However, since the concerts of the preliminary round are recorded in video and audio and the piece(s) are then available for evaluation as recordings, this is not mandatory.**
- The composition must not have been published as sheet music yet and should have a duration of approximately 2.5 to 5 minutes. Applicants are willing to enter into a publishing contract with the publisher "Acoustic Music Books" (publishing contract based on the guidelines of the German Music Publishers Association e.V.) upon winning the special prize. The composition will then be published as sheet music by Acoustic Music Books. The decision on the awarding of the special prize is made by

a representative of the publisher and a representative of GitarreHamburg. The decision is final and binding, and recourse to legal action is excluded.

- Program time must be adhered to:
 - Preliminary round between 25 and 30 minutes (including moderation). This time must not be exceeded or undercut. In case of exceeding, the organizer has the right to terminate the performance.
 - Final between 15 and 20 minutes (including moderation). This time must not be exceeded or undercut. In case of exceeding, the organizer has the right to terminate the performance.
- The program selection is at the discretion of the participants, but there is a blacklist of pieces from the previous edition of the HANSE GUITAR CUP that may not be performed this year in order to ensure a varied and diverse program.

Blacklist 2026:

- *Koyunbaba* (Carlo Domeniconi)
- *Asturias* (Isaac Albéniz)
- *Torre Bermeja* (Isaac Albéniz)
- *Variations on a Theme by Mozart* (Fernando Sor)
- *Fuoco* from *Libra Sonatine* (Roland Dyens)
- *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* (Francisco Tárrega)

The application is only considered complete and will only be processed if the following points are met:

- The application is submitted within the announced application deadlines (July 21, 2026 - 11:59 PM / September 15, 2026).
- The application documents are complete (online form, photo, resume, brief description of the program, video sample).
- Regarding the video:
 - Sent via email as a file or link.
 - The video file must be named with the participant's first and last name ("Firstname-Lastname.mp4" or "Firstname-Lastname.mov").
 - A YouTube link is also acceptable.
- You consent to the publication of the submitted material in audio and video for promotional purposes.
- You agree to these general "Conditions of Participation."

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