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Press Release

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IMMEDIATE

MTA Arts & Design Celebrates 30th Anniversary of Music Under New York Auditions with Special Concert

70 Acts Competing to Join MTA Program Showcasing Best of Local Music Talent

MTA Arts & Design announced today that it will celebrate the 30th annual auditions for Music Under New York (MTA MUSIC) with a special lunchtime concert by inaugural program members during this year's auditions on Thursday, May 18, when approximately 70 finalists will compete for a spot on the program's roster in Grand Central Terminal's Vanderbilt Hall.


MTA Arts & Design received 335 applications this year to join MTA MUSIC, a record number thanks to an [online submission process](#) that was introduced this January. The finalists invited to audition this year represent a large variety of musical genres and instruments and encompass a geographic background ranging from all five New York City boroughs to the suburbs of Long Island, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Some of the musicians who will perform live at the auditions include guitarists and popular music singers, as well as more unique genres such as a hulusi player and a koto and djembe ensemble.

"We are celebrating 30 years of great music with our annual auditions at Vanderbilt Hall, which is an amazing venue to showcase the unlimited talents of New York's buskers vying to join MTA MUSIC. This year we are not only showcasing those that hope to join the our roster but musicians who have performed with Music Under New York for the past 30 years – a testament that the subway is a great venue, not just a stop along the way," said MTA Arts & Design Director Sandra Bloodworth.

MTA Arts & Design will pay tribute to the longevity and continued popularity of Music Under New York with a special concert featuring longtime members of the program. Musicians who joined the roster more than 30 years ago will perform during the lunch break of the auditions from noon to 12:30 p.m.

The auditions are scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. and are open to the public and free to watch. Credentialed media are invited to cover the auditions, though given the limited space in Vanderbilt Hall, members of the media must submit a coverage request by telephone to the MTA Press Office.

During the auditions, each group or performer have five minutes to impress the dozens of judges, which include music industry professionals, members of cultural institutions, current MTA MUSIC members, and MTA operational staff. They judge the finalists on criteria such as quality, appropriateness for the transit environment, musical variety and cultural diversity, with the goal of increasing the number of genres represented in the program. Currently MTA MUSIC has [more than 350 performers](#) representing genres as wide-ranging as classical music (violin, opera, harp, etc.) to contemporary (blues, doo wop, folk, acapella, popular music, etc.) to experimental (fusion, alternative hip hop, beat box), and the culturally diverse (Chinese classical, Irish folk, kora, mariachi, aboriginal didgeridoo, etc.).

Music Under New York began as a 3.5-month-long pilot program on Sept. 12, 1985, under MTA's community affairs department. Its debut included a quintet of students from The Mannes College of Music and faculty from the Harlem School of the Arts in a performance at the Grand Central-42 St  shuttle platform. Music Under New York was officially founded in April 1987 as one of the visual and performing arts programs administered by MTA Arts & Design, then known as MTA Arts for Transit, to enhance the commuting experience. Music Under New York presented its first official musical performances on June 29, 1987. It immediately became popular and remains internationally known for the quality of international musical talent that the program attracts.

Once accepted into the program, MTA MUSIC performers are hosted at [approximately 30 locations](#) throughout the MTA network, including New York City Subway stations, MTA commuter rail terminals and the Staten Island Ferry terminal. When the program started as a pilot in 1985, musicians performed at specially marked spots designated by a colorfully painted square measuring 4 feet by 4 feet with the Music Under New York logo, which was then a giant musical note. Program members now perform in designated locations where they hang a Music Under New York banner that showcases their performer name and the rebranded Music Under New York logo created by the design firm Pentagram.

As with all performers in the subway system, they must abide by NYC Transit's [rules of conduct](#), which are enforced by the New York Police Department. MTA Arts & Design presents more than 7,500 musical performances in the transit system every year, with schedules revised every two weeks.

Approximately 20 performers will be added to the program roster after the auditions. MTA Arts & Design will announce the performers who have been accepted in June.

About Music Under New York (MTA MUSIC)

Through Music Under New York, more than 350 individual performers and ensembles participate in more than 7,500 performances in approximately 30 locations throughout the transit system annually. A variety of performers entertain the public, such as classical strings, jazz ensembles, world music

bands, folk, a cappella groups, singer-songwriters and more, playing instruments ranging from Gambian kora, Korean drum, West Indian steel drums, Andean pipes, cello, Celtic and baroque harps to guitars, violins, hammered dulcimers and musical saws.

About MTA Arts & Design:

MTA Arts & Design encourages the use of mass transit in the metropolitan New York area by providing visual and performing arts in the transit environment. The MTA Percent for Art program is one of the largest and most diverse collections of public art in the world, with more than 300 commissioned works by well-known, mid-career and emerging artists including Jacob Lawrence, Nancy Spero, Romare Bearden, Milton Glaser, Xenobia Bailey, Elizabeth Murray, Roy Lichtenstein, Shinique Smith, Al Held, Duke Riley, Faith Ringgold and new projects by Chuck Close, Vik Muniz, Jean Shin and Sarah Sze. Arts & Design produces award-winning graphic and digital art, photography installations, live musical performances, the Poetry in Motion program and other special events. It serves more than 2.6 billion people who ride MTA subways and trains each year and strives to create meaningful connections between sites, neighborhoods, and people. To learn more, visit mta.info/art.