

ENSEMBLE ALTERA 2025 COMPOSITION COMPETITION

Composers are invited to submit a new work for Ensemble Altera's fifth annual Composition Competition. The winning work(s) will be premiered and commercially recorded by the ensemble as part of its summer project, *The Four Elements*. A prize fund of \$1,000 is available.

ABOUT THE COMPOSITION

Composers are invited to set a text on one of the four classical elements: air, earth, fire, water. The work should be an *a cappella* composition lasting between three and five minutes, scored for any combination of mixed voices up to eight parts (e.g.: SATB, SSATB, SSAATTBB, SATB.SATB). The competition is open to all composers, regardless of age or experience. The deadline for submissions is Friday August 1, 2025 at 5PM EDT.

The competition will be judged by a specially convened panel including Ensemble Altera director Christopher Lowrey, one core member of the ensemble, and one industry professional. The panel reserves the right to divide the prize money between multiple winners if there is no consensus, or, in the unlikely event that none of the submissions meets a minimum artistic standard, to choose no winner. Shortlisted composers from previous competitions are invited to re-apply, but we will not accept submissions from any composers who have won the competition in a previous year.

A shortlist of finalists will be chosen by the panel and announced by Friday August 8, 2025 5PM EDT. The winner(s) will be chosen and announced by Friday August 15, 2025 at 5PM EDT. The shortlisted finalists who are not named winner(s) will receive an honorable mention. All entrants will be notified of the result privately by email at each stage of the competition before results are made public.

ABOUT THE ENSEMBLE

A chamber choir described by the BBC as "something extraordinary", **ENSEMBLE ALTERA** in its short history has already been identified as "a leading ensemble on the American choral scene" (*Scherzo Magazine*). Led by internationally celebrated countertenor [Christopher Lowrey](#), the group has quickly become known for thoughtful programming, passionate performances, and tireless

advocacy for the importance of ensemble singing in the broader music culture. *BBC Music Magazine*

called Ensemble Altera's debut album, *The Lamb's Journey*, "clean as a whistle and confident". *Europadisc* proclaimed the performances "wonderfully refined and expertly blended, with that combination of radiance, power and transparency that comes with the best chamber choirs". In the words of the *Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik* (German Record Critics' Award), which awarded the disc its coveted prize, "no recent recording debut in this field has been as spectacular." Recent programs include *Feminine Voices* (to be released on Alpha Classics in 2026), weaving together music for upper voices and harp by women composers across the ages with Benjamin Britten's timeless *Ceremony of Carols*, *A New Song: Psalms for the Soul*, an exploration of the Biblical Psalm texts in all their dizzying variety, and *A Christmas Present*, a sumptuous collection of seasonal music written in the new millennium. Ensemble Altera is now beginning to undertake tours throughout the USA, including repeat visits to Carnegie Hall, and expands this work over the coming season. Upcoming projects include *The Four Elements*, a contemplation of the awesome beauty and terrifying power of the natural world through the prism of the sky, earth, fire, and water. Additionally, Altera teams up with celebrated conductor Raphaël Pichon and the Orchestra of St. Luke's in a program entitled *Mein Traum*, starring soprano Ying Fang and baritone Christian Gerhaher. Later in 2025, the group offers new performances of its acclaimed chamber version of Handel's *Messiah* in its native home of Rhode Island. Deeply committed to championing new works and lifting up new voices from around the globe, over the past few seasons Altera has premiered works by Ian Gabriel Corpuz, Motshwane Pege, Toby Young, Joanna Marsh, Daniel Gledhill, Zuzanna Koziej, and Michael Garrepy, and is currently collaborating with young composer Piers Connor Kennedy in a major work, *Declarations*, to mark the 250th anniversary of the *Declaration of Independence* in 2026. In addition to performing, Ensemble Altera undertakes an extensive education and outreach program. Such activities include clinics and interactive presentations with school students in a variety of settings, with a particular focus on opening musical horizons to those from underserved backgrounds. Additionally, Altera has a profound faith in the healing power of music both in and out of the concert hall, and is proud to offer its complete recorded music library free of charge in [collaboration with select partners in music therapy](#).

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

1. Entrants are required to submit a choral setting of a text that tightly corresponds to the theme of this year's competition.
2. The work should be scored for unaccompanied mixed voices up to 8 parts, for example SATB, SSATB, SATBarB, SSAATTBB, SATB.SATB

3. The work should ideally last between three and five minutes, but shorter or longer work of exceptional quality will be considered.
4. Scores should be typeset on electronic engraving software, delivered electronically in PDF form, and accompanied by a midi sequence of the work, in MP3 format, which makes the work as clear as possible to make sense of (piano or string patches generally work better than choral or voice patches).
5. The competition is open to composers of any citizenship, country of residence, race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status.
6. Shortlisted composers from previous competitions are invited to re-apply, but submissions from any composers who have won this competition in a previous year will not be accepted.
7. Only one application per composer will be considered.

SUBMISSIONS

Scores should be sent in PDF form along with MIDI sequence recordings and the attached application form to: **alteracompetition@gmail.com** with the subject line "2025 Competition Submission". All submissions will be acknowledged by email within 48 hours. The deadline for submissions is Friday August 1, 2025 at 5PM EDT.

PRIZE FUND

A prize fund of \$1,000 is available, to be allocated at the panel's discretion, either to one or multiple winning compositions, or not at all in the unlikely event that none of the submissions meet a minimum artistic standard.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. The work must be original and the entry form signed with the written guarantee that it is solely the work of the composer.
2. The work must not have had a public performance, nor a recording that is publicly available (whether commercial or not), nor a broadcast of any sort.
3. The competition will be judged by a specially convened panel including Ensemble Altera director Christopher Lowrey, one core member of the ensemble, and one industry

professional.

4. The winner(s) will be notified privately by email before a public announcement on Friday August 15, 2025; the first public performances of the work(s) will be given during the weekend of September 12-14, 2025 in New England. The winning composer(s) is/are encouraged to attend the premiere where possible.

5. The winner(s) grant(s) exclusive rights to Ensemble Altera to perform for a period of 3 months, and to record the work(s) as part of Altera's *The Four Elements* project, as well as the option to include the work on a future commercial album. These rights must be granted to Altera with no additional fees or licenses.

6. Personal details on the entry form will be processed according to best data protection practices. The winning entrant(s) is/are expected to be identified and promoted post-competition publicity and to agree to their name(s) being made publicly known.

JUDGING PROCEDURES

In an effort to prevent any conflicts of interest or perceived conflicts of interest arising from the judging process, all submissions will be anonymized by a third party ahead of time and will be judged blindly by all members of the panel. A shortlist of roughly 5-10 pieces will be chosen by the panel, from which the winner(s) will be drawn. In all matters relating to the competition the decision of the panel is final and correspondence and requests for feedback will only be entertained for shortlisted pieces.

2025 COMPOSITION TEXTS

Composers may set any text, sacred or secular, which corresponds very clearly to one of the four elements: air, earth, fire, or water. In the case of any questions regarding texts, please contact the competition organizers at alteracompetition@gmail.com.

APPLICATION FORM

Fill out and attach this page as PDF by email along with composition materials.

Personal Information

Name:

Date of birth:

Address:

Telephone:

Email address:

Website (if applicable):

Closing date: Friday, August 1, 2025, 5PM EDT

Declaration

Ensemble Altera 2025 Composition Competition

I confirm that this work is original and solely my own work and does not infringe upon a third party copyrights. I have read and agreed to the Terms and Conditions of this competition.

Signed:

Date: