



The 4th Morin Khuur Festival in the USA, 2026

AMATEUR MORIN KHUUR COMPETITION GUIDELINES

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Purpose

This competition aims to provide opportunities for amateur morin khuur (horse-head fiddle) players to showcase their competencies, to encourage players to develop their skills with renewed motivation and clear future goals, and to promote Mongolian culture and heritage in North America.

2. Eligibility

The competition is open to all amateur players of the morin khuur, defined as those without professional training who are **not** currently pursuing a professional morin khuur degree.

3. Participation

Participants must compete according to all of the instructions provided, including the categories and rounds described below. The competition follows an elimination format. Participants who fail to advance may still join other festival activities (ensemble performances, gala concert, masterclasses, discussions, etc.).

4. Registration

Registration will take place online from **January 1 – February 1, 2026**.

Registration fee: **\$50 (non-refundable under any circumstances)**. Incomplete or late registrations will not be accepted. Registration link: <https://forms.gle/uT77mYVwhE8riJiG8>

5. Key Dates

Participants, parents, and instructors should carefully observe the following dates:

- ❖ **Registration:** January 1 – February 1, 2026
- ❖ **Round 1:** February 15–21, 2026 (online)
- ❖ **Round 2:** May 9, 2026
- ❖ **Round 3:** May 10, 2026

6. Location

The Robert and Judi Newman Center for the Performing Arts
University of Denver, 2344 East Iliff Avenue, Denver, CO 80208



7. Co-Organizers

The 4th Annual Morin Khuur Festival in the U.S.A. is organized by the **Morin Khuur Center in North America**, in cooperation with the **"Ajnai" Morin Khuur Center of Denver, Colorado**.

II. AGE GROUPS

The Morin Khuur Amateur Competition will be held in the following five categories:

- ❖ **Children A (up to 12 years old)**
 - Participated in the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd festivals in the U.S.A.
 - Studying for 3 or more years
- ❖ **Children B (up to 12 years old)**
 - Has not participated in the 1st–3rd festivals in the U.S.A.
 - Began studying in 2024 or later
- ❖ **Youth A (13–16 years old)**
 - Participated in the 1st–3rd festivals in the U.S.A.
 - Studying for 3 or more years
- ❖ **Youth B (13–16 years old)**
 - Has not participated in the 1st–3rd festivals in the U.S.A.
 - Began studying in 2024 or later
- ❖ **Adults (17 years and older)**

Note: Students, parents, and instructors must provide accurate information regarding length of study. The Morin Khuur Center in North America will verify its registration archives and assign those who previously participated in the U.S. festivals (1st–3rd) to Category A.

III. ROUNDS

The competition consists of **three rounds** for all categories:

Round 1: Online video evaluation. **Round 2 & Round 3:** In-person performances before a panel of judges

FIRST ROUND

Each participant must select **two pieces** according to the program below and submit qualifying video recordings.

- ❖ **Children A & B (Total: 6 minutes)**
 - A Mongolian folk short song, *besreg* long song, or *tatлага*
 - One Western classical or contemporary piece by a Mongolian composer



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❖ Youth A & B (Total: 6 minutes)

- A Mongolian folk short song, besreg long song, or tatlaga
- One Western classical or contemporary piece by a Mongolian composer

❖ Adults (Total: 8 minutes)

- A Mongolian folk short song, *besreg* or *aizam* long song, or *tatlaga*
- One Western classical or contemporary piece by a Mongolian composer

Submission timeline

Between **February 15–21, 2026**, participants must complete the video submission form and attach their **Unlisted YouTube link**. Submission link: <https://forms.gle/WetAiqH3cfGkp8bd8>

First-round results will be announced **by March 1, 2026**.

Video requirements

- Upload all videos to an **UNLISTED** YouTube link.
- Video title format (in English): **Category – Last Name, First Name – Title of Piece**
- Must be recorded from a **single, stationary camera angle**.
- Performer's full body and instrument must be clearly visible.
- Each piece must be submitted as a **separate video** (total of two videos).
- Videos must contain **no editing**. *Edited videos will result in disqualification.*

SECOND ROUND

Participants advancing from Round 1 must perform **two pieces** as follows:

❖ Children A & B (Total: 7 minutes)

- Folk short song, besreg long song, or tatlaga
- One Western classical or contemporary piece by a Mongolian composer

❖ Youth A & B (Total: 8 minutes)

- Folk short song, besreg long song, or tatlaga
- One Western classical or contemporary piece by a Mongolian composer

❖ Adults (Total: 10 minutes)

- Folk short song, besreg or aizam long song, or tatlaga
- One Western classical or contemporary piece by a Mongolian composer

THIRD ROUND

A total of **21 performers** will advance to Third Round - **4 from each category**, plus the 21st performer selected based on scores. All participants must perform **two pieces** as follows:



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❖ **Children A & B (Total: 8 minutes)**

- Folk short song, *besreg* long song, or *tatlaga*
- One Western classical or contemporary piece by a Mongolian composer

❖ **Youth A & B (Total: 10 minutes)**

- Folk short song, *besreg* or *aizam* long song, or *tatlaga*
- One Western classical or contemporary piece by a Mongolian composer

❖ **Adults (Total: 10 minutes)**

- Folk short song, *besreg* or *aizam* long song, or *tatlaga*
- One Western classical or contemporary piece by a Mongolian composer

IV. JURY & JUDGING

1. First-round results will be announced by March 1, 2026.
Results of rounds 2 and 3 will be announced one hour (1 hour) after each round.
2. Performances will be judged by professional morin khuur players and musicians. The head judge and four other judges for rounds 2 and 3 will be introduced on the first day of the festival.
3. Evaluation criteria:
 - Technique
 - Performance execution
 - Stage presence
4. Judges reserve the right to stop any performance during rounds 2 or 3.
5. Instrument tuning will be provided by designated staff. Teachers may not enter the stage area.
6. All judging decisions are **final** and must be respected by all participants, teachers, and parents.
7. Organizers will not share or publicly release video submissions without permission.

V. AWARDS

1. Each category will award **1st, 2nd, 3rd, and honorary place prizes**, plus **one Grand Prix winner**, totaling **21 awards**.
2. The winner of the Grand Prix will receive the **Ts. Batchuluun Memorial Trophy**. This annual award is named in honor of the late People's Merited Artist, Ts. Batchuluun, who founded the "Mongolian State Morin Khuur Ensemble." The 2026 Grand Prix winner will also receive a handcrafted, skin-faced morin khuur provided by "**Khan Khuur**," the festival's main sponsor and workshop of master luthier D. Ulambayar.

VI. COMPETITION RULES & CONDITIONS



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1. Participants who have won the Grand Prix in the **Adult category** are NOT eligible to compete again.
2. Participants who have won the Grand Prix in the **Children or Youth category** cannot receive the Grand Prix again, but may compete again in their age category or in a higher category.
3. The organizers will not distribute your recording to the public without your permission, nor will they use it for purposes other than the competition.
4. Participants must cover their own travel, food, and accommodation expenses.
5. Participants under 18 must be supervised by parents or guardians at all times.
6. Organizers are not responsible for any damage, loss, or theft during the competition or gala concert.
7. Organizers reserve the right to remove any participant from the competition or prohibit participation in festival activities for violating any of the guidelines above or for any of the following:
 - Attempts to influence the competition process improperly
 - Verbal abuse or physical aggression toward any individual on the festival premises
 - Use of alcohol or illegal substances during the competition or festival