Recommendations for Successful Online Competition Participation

The AHS has technical resources to assist finalists in making the best presentation possible. In preparation here are a few preliminary technical tips to get you started thinking about your setup:

- Plan ahead and request that others at home, or in the location where you will be performing, go offline while you are competing.

- Connecting your computer to your router via an Ethernet cable is an excellent safeguard over relying solely on a Wi Fi connection.

- A high resolution web cam and a separate high quality omni-directional microphone intended for music recording or broadcasting will make for an optimal sound and video presentation. Make sure you have a quiet, well-lit environment from which to compete. If not at home, perhaps a church space, school, or college classroom or studio. A large empty space, such as church sanctuary or concert hall may not be an advantage because the sound could resonate too much and produce echoes. A high quality microphone is, in this case, more to your advantage than a huge empty space.

- Present yourself as you would for a live performance. While you will not be judged on your appearance still, dressing as you would for a live performance helps put you in a performance mind set. Check your camera view and position the camera so we can see your hands across the entire range of the harp. A view of the entire harp is optimal: if that's not possible, a visual from at least the knees up would be great.

Check your Internet Connection
- Establish a hard-wired (connected directly to your router or modem) internet connection using an ethernet cable if at all possible.

- Test your connection speed at www.SpeedTest.net or similar site: minimum recommendation is 10Mbps UPLOAD speed

- If performing from home, prioritize the internet connection on the Finalist's device during the competition (other family members could refrain from using the Internet connection during the performance.)

- Chrome is recommended as the browser of choice for the best experience with the Socio online platform. Firefox also works.

- Review excerpts from Socio (see below) as a reminder of the login process. This information is not customized for the AHS Competition; it is provided as a general guide.

Select Your Device
- Use a computer, not a mobile device. A laptop or a desktop is fine.

- We strongly recommend that you use an external microphone and camera for your competition as the audio quality of the built in microphones on computers is not as good.

- Make sure your equipment is securely position and you and your harp are fully visible at all times (no music stand as memorization is required.)

- **Microphone Recommendations:**
  These microphones below are recommended by professional harpists and recording engineers.

    o Shure Motiv88 or Motiv88+

    o Rode VideoMic Pro

    o Zoom H4N Pro

    o Audio Technica AT-8024

    o Blue Snowball USB Microphone

    o Yeti

  Camera Recommendation
    o Logitech HD Pro Webcam C920 or similar

Identify a Competition Space
- Large rooms with high ceilings will generally offer the best acoustics.

- Spaces with excessive reverberation Are to be avoided.

- Once you have identified a performance space, check the followings:

    o **Locate a power outlet** Have your device connected to a power outlet so that they are powered throughout your performance. If that isn't possible, use extension cords or make sure to have fully charged your device.

    o **Listen for background noise** Take a moment to listen for and disconnect any noisy appliances in the room (heaters, A/C, fans, etc.) Make sure no one's conversation can be heard. Close doors and windows

    o **Limit interruptions** Alert family members, roommates, isolate pets, etc. Turn off notification on all of your devices and put them in **Do Not Disturb** mode. Silence all other electronics (landlines, alarm clocks, TVs, etc.)

    o **Find an area with a simple, neat background (few visual distractions)**

    o **Consider the lighting** Being lit from the front, not from behind will go a long way towards avoiding shadows and reflections. Check the lighting in advance and at the same time of day that your competition is scheduled (identify shadows, avoid reflections, etc.) Add lighting as needed

Socio Streaming Speaker Instructions
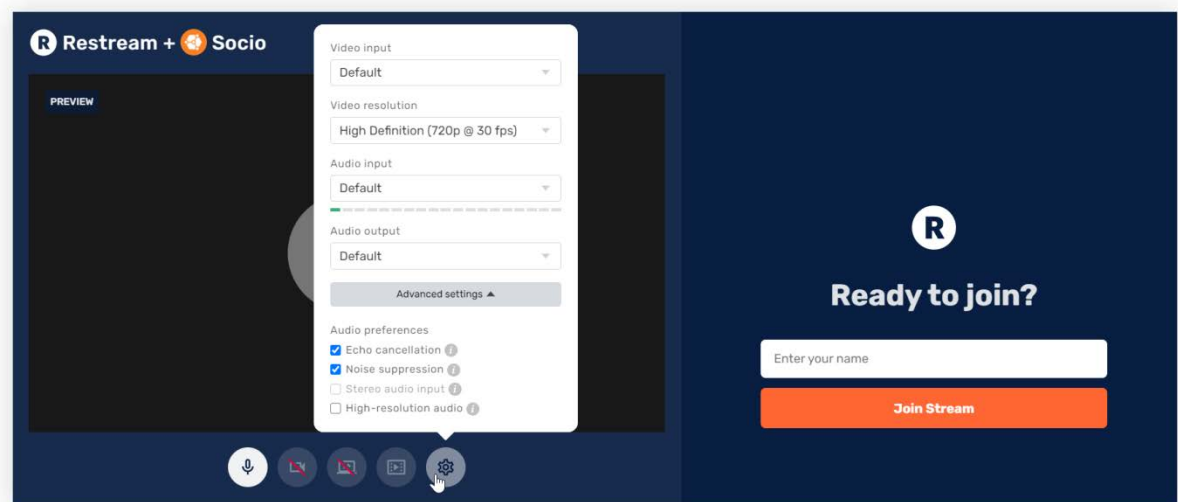
Before the broadcast

Make sure you have the following:

- A **laptop or desktop** with a webcam and mic.
- A recent version of **Chrome or Firefox**.
- A strong internet connection. Just like Skype, you must have a strong internet connection for it to work well. If possible, connect to your router with an ethernet cable instead of using WiFi.

Joining the broadcast

When the time comes, follow these steps to enter the broadcast studio:
1. The host should provide you with a link before the show. Click the link and you'll be taken to their broadcast studio.
2. Allow Socio Streaming access to your camera and mic.
3. Make sure you have the correct camera and mic selected. You can also Turn Echo cancellation and Noise suppression off.
4. Enter a display name. Use your actual name or the name of your brand. Then enter the studio. (AHS Finalists – use your letter identifier, i.e., "Contestant C")

5. The host will see that you've arrived in the studio. You won't be part of the broadcast until the host decides to add you in. The page will update to let you know when you've been added, and everyone will be able to see and hear you. This is your time to shine!