

# Wood River Singer Named U.S. Finalist for Karaoke World Championship

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
July 26 2023 1:46 PM



WOOD RIVER - Anika Bella has dreams of being on Broadway, but in the meantime, she's heading to Las Vegas. Anika is competing in the U.S. National Finals for the World Karaoke Championship, with hopes of making it to the World Finals later this year.

"To be a young aspiring artist coming from such a small town, to come and represent them in Vegas is going to be a huge opportunity," Anika said. "Even if I don't make it

to the World Finals, just getting my name out there and being able to say good things about our area and the people that brought me up.”

Unlike other singing competitions, karaoke competitions are for people who have “natural raw talent and need a way to get out there, and can’t afford to put themselves out there,” Anika explained. It’s not necessarily for professional singers or people who have an extensive background in music. Participants in karaoke competitions are running on passion and practice.

“A singing competition through a college or a prestigious singing competition, that would be for people who have had lessons their whole life and were raised around music or educated around it. Whereas in these karaoke contests, it says, ‘Okay, listen, you don’t even need to have an instrument. If you have a good voice, come try it out.’ It’s the kind of thing that anyone who can sing can try,” she said.

Anika has been participating in karaoke competitions since she was 10. At age 12, she sang to an audience of nearly 10,000 people at Busch Stadium before a game. She has participated in multiple karaoke competitions since then, with performances at the Illinois State Fair and the Route 66 Festival in Springfield.

But the Karaoke World Championship was special from the beginning. Newly 21, Anika explained the process has been her chance to “compete with the big boys” after years of participating in youth competitions. And she quickly proved she was up to the challenge; her video audition ranked her second in the U.S.

“I was just like, oh my gosh, I need to take this more seriously,” she laughed. In the next round, she placed in the top five, which means she’s off to Vegas to compete in the U.S. National Finals.

One day, Anika would love to perform on Broadway in a musical like “Anastasia” or “Wicked.” She is especially proud of her ability to belt, which is a highly-valued skill in contemporary Broadway musicals, and hopes to eventually support herself through singing.

In the meantime, she’s excited to compete in Las Vegas in August and show the country what she’s got. Not only will Anika be one of the youngest competitors, but she’s also the only one who isn’t from a big city. She acknowledges that she could categorize herself as a St. Louis resident for the sake of the competition, but she’d rather represent southern Illinois and her hometown of Wood River.

“Thank you to everyone who supported me in my small town. We’re all kind of like a big family here. I’ve lived here my whole life, and I am just really grateful to everyone

who's ever come out to one of my competitions or liked my Facebook page or anything like that," Anika said, adding, "When it comes down to a talent that you have and your success, it depends on you...Find a way to get it done. Don't let other people tell you you can't do it."

More information about the Karaoke World Championship can be found at their [official website](#) or [Facebook page](#). To follow Anika Bella's journey, check out her [Facebook page](#) or [TikTok account](#), where she regularly posts updates and singing videos.