

**Thinking about giving a performance or a concert in the United States?
Make sure you check in advance if you need a special U.S. visa!**

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The U.S. Embassy in Riga issues a significant number of visas for Latvian artists and entertainers every year.

We value cultural exchange between Latvia and the United States. U.S. immigration law includes special visa classes for members of the entertainment profession¹, separate from a business/tourism visa and separate from the Visa Waiver Program. **In most cases, professional artists and entertainers intending to perform in the United States must enter the country using a P, H or O visa.** These are petition-based visas, meaning a U.S. agent or inviting entity must file a petition on your behalf. We encourage you to review the information below and on our website. By entering the country with the correct visa, you help to ensure your continued ability to travel to the United States for both your professional activities and tourism.

Should you have any questions, you may always contact the embassy's Consular Section at AskConsular@USRiga.lv or at 6710-7000.

I have a regular day job in Latvia, but I also perform. Am I considered a professional artist or entertainer for U.S. visa purposes?

Even if you do not make living at performing, but you are typically compensated for your performances (concerts, plays, films, etc.), you are considered a professional entertainer under U.S. immigration law. An amateur is someone who normally performs without pay. A professional artist or entertainer cannot qualify for a B visa or travel visa-free to carry out their professional activities in the United States, even if they agree to perform without compensation.

U.S. immigration law defines separately the circumstances under which foreign amateur entertainers may perform in the United States and what visas they require for that.

Are there any exceptions when I can give concerts or performances if travelling to the United States on a B1 (business) visa or using the Visa Waiver Program?

Only if all three of the following conditions are met:

1. You are coming to the United States to participate in a cultural program sponsored by the Latvian government;
2. All performances will be before a non-paying audience; and
3. All expenses, including per diem, will be paid by the Latvian government.

¹ Members of the entertainment profession include actors, musicians, singers and dancers, as well as the accompanying personnel such as managers, electricians, technicians, make-up artists, and film crew members coming to the United States to produce films, etc. Photographers, sculptors, painters and others in the fine arts should review separate regulations governing these activities.

In addition, professional entertainers may travel visa-free or using business visas if they are coming to the United States to participate in a competition for which there is no remuneration other than a prize (monetary or otherwise) and expenses.

What if I will not be paid for my performance? What if there is no ticket charge? Can I use my B1/B2 visa or travel visa-free?

Except for the circumstances listed previously, B visa status or the Visa Waiver Program is **not** appropriate for an artist or their accompanying personnel who seek to enter the United States temporarily to perform services. In most cases, the correct visa classification is P or H, regardless of the amount or source of compensation, whether the services will involve public appearance(s), or whether the performance is for charity.

Can I record an album in the United States when traveling on a B1 visa or using the Visa Waiver Program?

Maybe. You do not need a special visa (P or H category) provided the following conditions are met:

1. You are coming to the United States in order to utilize recording facilities for recording purposes only;
2. The recording will be distributed and sold only **outside** the United States; and
3. No public performances will be given.

How do I get a P, H, or O visa?

P, H, and O visas, all are temporary worker visas. There is a two-steps process you must follow for obtaining such visas:

1. Your inviting U.S. organization or company must file a petition I-129, Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker, with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service. Please visit their website for more information: <http://www.uscis.gov>. See the section “Working in the US: Temporary (Nonimmigrant) Worker.”
2. When the petition I-129 is approved, you must apply for a visa with the U.S. Embassy in Riga, following the standard nonimmigrant visa application procedure. Detailed instructions are available on our website at <http://riga.usembassy.gov>. See the section “Visas: U.S. Nonimmigrant Visas: Applying for or Renewing U.S. Visas.”