



2026 Festival Information for Schools

**Years 5-8 (including Male Vocal Ensemble Years 7-12) and Jazz Academy (Years 9-12)
Sunday 16 August – Wednesday 19 August 2026**

The HICES Music Festival brings together over 400 musicians from across HICES schools in New South Wales. In 2026, we will bring together like-minded musicians for the HICES Music Festival Years 5-8 (including Male Vocal Ensemble for changed voice students in Years 7-12) and Jazz Academy (Students in Years 9-12).

Students will work with experienced conductors and guest conductors at The Tops Conference Centre in Stanwell Tops. Camp participants will be transported to Sydney Town Hall for final daytime rehearsals on Wednesday 19 August 2026. The program will conclude with a Jazz Academy concert at 4.00pm at Darling Quarter Theatre, followed by the 7.00pm Festival Concert at Sydney Town Hall featuring all ensembles (Years 5–8, Male Vocal Ensemble, and Jazz Academy).

Travel to Stanwell Tops on Sunday, and from Sydney Town Hall after the Festival Concert, will be arranged by individual HICES schools.

The Camp – The Tops Conference Centre, Stanwell Tops

The Tops Conference Centre, located in Stanwell Tops is an outstanding venue. The Centre offers excellent accommodation and rehearsal facilities and provides the perfect music camp location. Students will be housed in cabins, grouped by school where possible.

Each full day of the Music Festival will consist of three daytime sessions, and one evening session. Daytime sessions include rehearsal time, tutorials and outdoor activities. Evenings are packed with student concerts, Just Dance, Guest Artist workshops (Jazz Academy) and a special “Preview Concert”.

Jazz Academy Concert – Darling Quarter Theatre

Final rehearsals/workshops will take place at Darling Quarter Theatre on Wednesday 19 August 2026 with a Jazz Academy concert commencing at 4.00pm. Following this concert, students will go to Sydney Town Hall where they will be provided dinner and then participate in the Festival Concert commencing at 7.00pm. Information about ticket purchases to the Concerts will be available from Term 3, 2026.

The Festival Concert – Sydney Town Hall

Final rehearsals will take place at Sydney Town Hall on Wednesday 19 August 2026 with the Festival Concert commencing at 7.00pm. Information about ticket purchases to the Festival Concert will be available from Term 3, 2026.

Supervision

The Festival is fully supervised by staff from HICES Schools, and each school represented will have staff in attendance. All staff involved in the Festival meet the requirements for working with children.

Ensembles

There will be seven combined school ensembles at the HICES Music Festival Years 5-8. This includes Male Vocal Ensemble, which is open to male students Years 7-12, with Changed Voices. All students (including Jazz Academy) will be involved in the Festival Finale (Massed Choir) item.

- Concert Band
- Symphonic Winds
- String Ensemble
- String Orchestra
- Vocal Ensemble
- Male Vocal Ensemble
- HICES Music Festival Finale

Allocation to ensembles will be made by the HICES Music Festival Organisers, based on application, audition, and school feedback.

The HICES Music Festival Years 9-12 Jazz Academy will run concurrently with the Years 5-8 Festival. The Jazz Academy curriculum includes master classes, ensemble playing and performance, as well as music theory, history and improvisation. Emphasis will be placed upon developing participants' jazz skills and techniques.

Camp Fees and Inclusions

The cost of the 2026 HICES Music Festival will be **\$680 per student**. All accommodation and meals during the Festival, and a special Festival Hoodie or Jazz Academy Jacket are included in this cost. This also includes transport from Stanwell Tops to Sydney Town Hall on Wednesday 19 August.



Apply Now! Student Applications are now open.

**Applications will close on Wednesday 25 March 2026.
No late applications will be accepted.**

**Apply for the HICES Music Festival Years 5-8
(including Male Vocal Years 7-12) and Jazz Academy (Years 9-12)
[here](#)**

A recorded audition will also be required. The audition process for the HICES Festival is a placement audition which will be coordinated by your HICES School Music Department. This process will determine which ensemble you will be in for this year's event. It is important all students take the audition seriously through preparation of the correct requirements. Students who do not follow the criteria will not be considered for any ensemble.

Please note, if you make a 2nd choice on the Student Application, a 2nd auditions will also be required for this instrument/voice.

HICES Music Festival Years 5-8 - Instrumentalists

- One prepared piece or excerpt of your choice, unaccompanied, that displays your ability. Duration 1-2 minutes.
- One unprepared sight-reading excerpt, provided by your teacher from the HICES Festival Committee.

HICES Music Festival Years 5-8 - Vocalists

- Advance Australia Fair or alternative, performed with a supplied countermelody recording, provided by your teacher from the HICES Festival Committee.

HICES Music Festival – Jazz Academy - Instrumentalists

- One prepared piece of your choice, unaccompanied, that demonstrates your technical ability. Duration 1 minute.
- Improvise over a blues progression for at least 12 bars (this may be included in the above recording). Drummers to play 12 bars of improvisation, in a jazz style.
- One unprepared sight-reading excerpt, provided by your teacher from the HICES Festival Committee. Please state which part you are playing at the start of your recording (ie – I will be playing the Trombone 3 part).

HICES Music Festival – Jazz Academy Vocalists

- One prepared piece from a Jazz standard, performed with a suitable backing track. The standard should be performed in a swing style, in a suitable key for the candidate. Duration 1 minute.
- Optional for vocalists to submit improvised scat solo over a 12 bar blues.

Tips for a Successful Audition

- Be well prepared so you will be less nervous.
- Practice your prepared piece with attention to detail. Dynamics and expression are important.

- Spend as much time practicing sight reading as you can.
- Dress in your uniform to show you care about your performance.
- Be friendly, confident, and speak your name and school clearly looking into the camera.

The audition panel will look at your technical proficiency, tone and overall skills in your video.

Audition recordings are to be collated and submitted to the HICES Festival Committee by each school.

Student Auditions are due Friday 1 May 2026

Placements

Acceptance into the HICES Music Festival, and allocation of ensembles will be determined by the HICES Music Festival Organisers. Offers will be made during Term 2, via your HICES School Music Department. In some instances, additional offers may be made late in Term 2, or the beginning of Term 3.

Since 1988, the HICES Music Festival has provided an outstanding opportunity for young musicians in HICES schools to gather and experience musical excellence. We are looking forward to another exciting and successful event in 2026.

For further information, please contact your HICES School Music Department.

