



REGIONAL FESTIVAL REGISTRATION 2026

1. CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

A The Big Sing is open to choirs from individual schools, which may enter as many choirs as they wish. However, two schools may join to form a combined choir.

B All singers must be full-time day students of the participating school from Year 7 to 13, with an upper age limit of 19 as of 1 January (in conformity with the Education Act 1989, Section 3). The inclusion of Year 7 and 8 students is limited to schools designated as 'Area' or as 'Year 7 to 13', with a maximum of 30% of the choir being Years 7 and 8. Each choir must have a minimum of 12 singers.

C Choirs are encouraged to enter a Regional Festival regardless of whether they wish to be considered for selection to Cadenza or Finale.

D Each choir may present one, two or three songs, amounting to no more than ten minutes' total aggregate performance time.

E Choirs not wishing to compete, e.g. by not singing an item from each category, may still be eligible for regional awards.

F Choirs may sing with or without a conductor. Conductors, accompanists and backing musicians may be adults or students.

G Where fitting the musical style, e.g. vocal jazz, the use of microphones and/or backing track is permitted.

H Each school must hold a current OneMusic Licence to be eligible for inclusion in the Regional Festival.

<https://www.onemusicnz.com/music-licences/schools/>

I Choirs presenting works in te reo Māori should ensure that they, or the composer/arranger, have received in advance the appropriate permission from the relevant whānau or other kaitiaki (guardians) of the text and the music.

J All participating choirs will receive a written report on their performance after the Regional Festival.

K The Big Sing will be run in compliance with any NZ Government Covid-19 requirements that may be in place at the time of the event.

2. FOR SELECTION TO CADENZA OR FINALE

A Choirs must perform three pieces, selected from each of the designated categories of musical styles (see list below).

B Each choir's programme must include no more than ten minutes' total aggregate performance time (applause and breaks between pieces are not included in the total aggregate). Exceeding the time limit will result in a deduction of ten points from the choir's final moderated percentage mark.

C A competing choir may not perform repertoire it sang at the most recent Regional Festival, Cadenza or Finale.

D All members of a choir must be involved in that choir's entire programme. Extensive use of solo voices is discouraged.

E Choir directors must provide the Regional Coordinator with a clear score (or words, where no written music exists) of each piece to be sung. Scores must be either an original publication or an authorised photocopy. Evidence of appropriate permissions for pieces in te reo Māori should be presented along with any sheet music before the choir's recital (see item 1.I above).

F Limits are in place regarding the percentage of singers from one choir that may sing in another.

i) No more than 20% of the members of a larger SA or TB* choir may sing in a smaller SA or TB* choir from the same school.

ii) No more than 50% of the members of a choir from one school may sing in a combined choir from two schools.

3. GENERAL INFORMATION

A Online registration will be open on The Big Sing page (<https://nzcf.org.nz/events/nzcf-events/big-sing>) from **18 February 2026**. Entries should be submitted by **18 March 2026**.

B The entry fee is **\$11.00** (incl. GST) per singer.

C Late entries will be accepted up until **5 April 2026** and won't incur a penalty. Schools with fees still unpaid by **8 May** will incur a **\$100** penalty.

D Regional Coordinators will contact each entering school with further information about their Regional Festival and for details about their choir(s).

E Travel and other costs are the responsibility of individual choirs or schools.

F Entry fees are not refundable in the event of withdrawal after **15 May 2026**. Choirs withdrawing before this date will be entitled to a refund of their fee, less an administration fee of **\$60**. Notification of withdrawal should be sent to the Regional Coordinator who will inform the NZCF Events Manager.

G For further general information please contact your Regional Coordinator. Contact details are available on the NZCF website – <https://nzcf.org.nz/events/nzcf-events/big-sing>

H Any queries regarding the matching of pieces to category criteria should be referred to the NZCF Events Manager Emma Billings: emma.billings@nzcf.org.nz

**This rule extends to include SATB choirs comprising trebles, countertenors, tenors & basses.*



CADENZA 2026

LOCATIONS AND DATES

The three 2026 Cadenza festivals will be held in:

- Whanganui: 10-11 August (covering the East Coast, Taranaki, Manawatu-Whanganui and Wellington regions)
- Rotorua: 18-19 August (covering the Northland, Auckland and Waikato-Bay of Plenty regions)
- Timaru: 21-22 August (covering the Marlborough-Nelson, Canterbury-West Coast, Otago-South Canterbury and Southland regions)

ADJUDICATORS

The names of the Cadenza adjudicator or adjudicators will be announced on the NZCF website.

SELECTION

A After the Regional Adjudication Panel has selected the choirs to attend Finale, it will select a further 12 choirs from each of the regional areas listed above – a total of 36 choirs from around New Zealand. Choirs selected as Finale reserves will be entitled to go to their area Cadenza if they are not called on for Finale.

The adjudicators' decision is final and no discussion or correspondence will be entered into.

B A maximum of one choir per school will be selected. A minimum of two SATB and two TB* choirs will be chosen for each festival.

C No more than 50% of the members of an SA or TB* choir may sing in a combined-school SATB choir.

D Singers participating in Cadenza choirs must be the same as those who performed in their regional events. Each choir must sing its entire repertoire with all its members performing.

FORMAT

E Competing choirs will present two recitals, each consisting of two items. One of the four items will be a set piece supplied by NZCF in SATB/SSAA/TTBB arrangements.

F Of the remaining three items, at least one must be chosen from each of Category One and Two (see Categories of Musical Styles below). (Note that the set piece cannot be counted towards fulfilling this requirement.) A maximum of one item may have been performed by the choir at last year's Regional festival, but none may have been performed by the choir at last year's Cadenza or Finale.

G A maximum of 8 minutes' total performance time is allowed for each recital. The duration of the test piece will be included in the 8 minutes allocated to the relevant recital.

H In the event of a violation of the Cadenza criteria, NZCF may withdraw or reduce any award earned.

I Each Cadenza festival will conclude with a Gala Concert featuring all choirs in a showcase of music performed over the two days, along with some massed items. Each choir will be required to perform one item from their Cadenza repertoire (see **M**).

J Where appropriate to the musical style of the chosen item, up to two microphones and a backing track may be used.

CADENZA FEE

J A fee of \$14 per singer will be charged to help with running costs. This will be invoiced on the choir's acceptance.

K Entry fees are not refundable in the event of withdrawal after **17 July 2026**. Choirs withdrawing before this date will be entitled to a 50% refund of their fee. Notification of withdrawal should be sent to the NZCF Events Manager.

TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION

L Each choir is responsible for arranging and funding its own accommodation and travel.

GALA CONCERT ITEMS

M Choirs may nominate the piece from their programme that they wish to perform in the Gala Concert. However, the adjudicator may, for programming purposes, ask them to sing a different piece.

AWARDS

Tūi, Korimako and Wharauora Awards will be presented to competing choirs that achieve the appropriate standard. Judging criteria will be forwarded to the selected choirs prior to Cadenza. Again, the adjudicators' decisions are final.

Māori Performance Award for the best performance of a work using a text in te reo Māori.

Set Piece Award for the best performance of the Cadenza set piece.

**This rule extends to include SATB choirs comprising trebles, countertenors, tenors & basses.*



NATIONAL FINALE 2026

LOCATIONS AND DATES

The National Finale will be held in the Christchurch Town Hall, from Thursday 27 to Saturday 29 August 2026.

ADJUDICATORS

The names of the Adjudicator Panel for Finale will be announced on the NZCF website.

SELECTION

A The Regional Adjudicator Panel will select the 24 top-scoring choirs to attend Finale. The adjudicators' decision is final and no discussion or correspondence will be entered into.

B A maximum of two choirs per school will be selected. A minimum of five SATB and four TB* choirs will be chosen for Finale.

C i) No more than 20% of the members of a larger SA or TB* choir may sing in a smaller choir of similar make-up.

ii) No more than 50% of the members of a SA or TB* choir may sing in an SATB choir.

D Singers participating in Finale choirs must be the same as those who performed in their regional events. Each choir must sing its entire repertoire with all its members performing.

FORMAT

E Competing choirs will present two recitals, the first of three items of no more than 10 minutes' total performance time, and the second of two items of no more than 8 minutes' total performance time.

F Of these five items, at least one must be chosen from Category One and at least two from Category Two, with the remaining two items from Category Three 'Open Choice' (see Category of Musical Styles below). There is no requirement for a choir to repeat any of its repertoire from this year's Regional. However, a maximum of two items may have been performed by the choir at last year's Regional, and none may have been performed at last year's Cadenza or Finale.

G In the event of a violation of the Finale criteria, NZCF may withdraw or reduce any award earned.

H The Finale will conclude with a Gala Concert at Christchurch Town Hall on Saturday 29 August, which will feature all choirs in a showcase of music performed over the three days. Each choir is required to perform one item from their Finale repertoire (see **N**).

I Where appropriate to the musical style of the chosen item, up to two microphones and a backing track may be used.

FINALE FEE

J A fee of \$14 per singer is charged to help with running costs. This will be invoiced on the choir's acceptance.

K Entry fees are not refundable in the event of withdrawal after **17 July 2026**. Choirs withdrawing before this date will be entitled to a 50% refund of their fee. Notification of withdrawal should be sent to the NZCF Events Manager.

TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION

L Each choir is responsible for arranging and funding its accommodation and travel.

EXCLUSIVITY

M Choirs based outside the host city may not perform in formal public concerts within the host city during the week of The Big Sing Finale, except as part of official Finale events. Choirs based in the host city may only perform within their own school for friends and family during Finale week. Public concerts open to the wider community are not permitted during this period.

GALA CONCERT ITEMS

N Choirs may nominate the piece from their programme that they wish to perform in the Gala Concert. However, the adjudicators may, for programming purposes, ask them to sing a different piece.

AWARDS

Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards will be presented to competing choirs that achieve the appropriate standard. Judging criteria will be forwarded to the selected choirs prior to the Finale. Again, the adjudicators' decisions are final.

Māori Performance Award for the best performance of a work using a text in te reo Māori.

Hutt City Trophy for the best performance of a Category One piece (New Zealand Music).

Tour Time Trophy for the best performance of a Category Two piece (Choral Art Music).

Other Styles Award, for a piece that does not qualify as Category One or Category Two.

Pre-20th Century Award for best performance of a piece composed prior to 1900.

Pasifika Award for best performance of a Pacific music piece.

Audience Impact Award, selected by a VIP guest or guests at the gala concert. This award recognises a choir that not only delivers a musically outstanding performance but also engages the audience, creating a memorable experience.

Choral Composition Awards for the SOUNZ-NZCF Te Reo Māori Choral Composition Competition and the SOUNZ-NZCF Choral Composition Competition will also be presented at Finale.

**This rule extends to include SATB choirs comprising trebles, countertenors, tenors & basses.*



CATEGORIES OF MUSICAL STYLES 2026

CATEGORY ONE

New Zealand Music

- Māori
- Pasifika
- New Zealand Art Music (original composition, sacred or secular)
- New Zealand Folk Music (traditional lyrics and melody in a choral arrangement)
- New Zealand Popular Music

CATEGORY TWO

Choral Art Music

Secular or sacred music of any age, written originally, or arranged specifically, for choir or vocal ensemble, excluding Gospel and Popular music (eg jazz, swing, pop, rock, hip hop, rap).

Note that New Zealand Choral Art Music is also allowed in this category.

CATEGORY THREE

Open Choice

Formerly called Director's Choice, this category includes all choral music, including pieces that fall into Categories One and Two.

Choirs are encouraged to present a balanced programme showing variety of style, genre and mood. Adjudicators will reward programmes that demonstrate stylistic variety and technical accomplishment.

Any queries about the categories should be directed in the first instance to the NZCF Events Manager Emma Billings emma.billings@nzcf.org.nz

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

In their assessment of TBS performances, adjudicators will take the following elements into consideration.

Technical skill

- Intonation, blend and balance
- Vocal quality
- Diction and language
- Complexity and accuracy

Artistic merit

- Communication and presentation
- Interpretation and style