

NATIONAL YOUTH MUSIC ARRANGING COMPETITION 2026 COMPETITION GUIDELINES

National Youth Arranging Competition Guidelines 2026

This document outlines general guidelines for the abovementioned arranging competition for 2026. These include:

1. Choice of Works
2. Ensemble details
3. Instrument Ranges and Percussion List
4. Score and Parts Preparation
5. Copyright/ Composer Information
6. Competition Marking Guidelines – What are the competition judges looking for?

Refer to the Guild Website <https://www.magainc.org.au/competition> for other details such as closing date and lead sheets.

If you have any specific questions, please contact admin@magainc.org.au.

1. Choice of Works

Choose **ONE** of the three options below and arrange for String Quartet and Percussion:

1. Movement 1 from Drei Romanzen Op.21 (1853) by Clara Schumann – [Drei Romanzen YouTube link](#)
2. Zero Gravity by Kate Miller-Heidke - [Zero Gravity YouTube link](#)
3. TVA (from Loki) by Natalie Holt - [TVA \(Loki\) YouTube Link](#)

Notes:

1. *The arrangement must be an original arrangement and not an “orchestration” or adaption of an existing arrangement.*
2. *You can transpose to a key that you deem suitable*
3. *The arrangement must not be more than 5 minutes in length*

2. Ensemble Details

The ensemble selected to workshop and record the top 3 winning pieces for the 2026 National Youth Arranging Competition is [Darlington Concerts](#) (Perth based).

The workshop is planned to take place in Perth in late November 2026 but will be confirmed at a later date.

3. Instrument Ranges and Percussion List

String Quartet instrumentation plus one percussionist (who may play multiple instruments)

- Violin 1
- Violin 2
- Viola
- Violoncello
- Percussionist – Vibraphone + up to Three (3) Auxiliary percussion instruments.
 - You must write for Vibraphone as the main percussion instrument
 - All types of standard hand percussion can be included such as tambourine, shakers, triangle, castanets, etc
 - Tom-tom, snare and other smaller drums are acceptable
 - You may use Glockenspiel, but no other mallet percussion other than Vibraphone
 - You may use wind chimes, cymbals and other instruments on stands
 - No large instruments such as Gran Cassa or Tubular Bells or Tam Tam

VIBRAPHONE range and compositional techniques – a good guide can be found here:

<https://nickparnell.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Composing-for-the-Vibraphone.pdf>

You may write for 2 mallets or 4 mallets. With 4 mallets make sure the distance between intervals is playable in each hand.

STRING RANGES

Use this website for advice on all instrumental range limits:

<https://www.dolmetsch.com/musictheory29.htm>

Here is a good page on String Quartet examples:

<https://alevelmusic.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/string-techniques.pdf>

NOTE: The performers are of a professional level but consider your arrangement may be played by ensembles of a lower level as well, so keep virtuosity under control for wider publication (and for successful future performances and publication with Arrangeme.com)

4. Score and Parts Preparation

1. Arrangements should use the full ensemble, including two violins, viola, cello and a percussionist.
2. PDF Parts are required with your competition submission entry; please treat these parts as a fully professional set that will be sent to the ensemble if you are a competition winner.
3. On the next two pages you will find an example of a score and part for this ensemble.
4. Note the spacing of the parts for ease of reading, rehearsal letters, bar numbers and indications are neat and tidy, evenly spaced and ready to print.

Score

Romeo and Juliet
Suite No.3 Op.64 - I - Romeo at the Fountain

Prokofiev
Arr. Jessica Wells

Andante ♩ = 63

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Marimba

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Mrb.

7

A

16

- 2. special staging requirements, etc.
- iii. First page of music to contain title, composer, lyricist etc in appropriate font and size. **(Normally arranger name would be on the score but please do not include to ensure judging anonymity)**
- iv. Pages to be formatted to enable score to be printed either A3, B4 or A4 (portrait).
- v. Minimum score staff size is 4mm. Note heads should be large enough for the conductor to read with ease at the podium if the score requires a conductor.
- vi. Bar lines should be continuous within each family of instruments.
- vii. Correct use of rehearsal marks.
- viii. Scores to be formatted double-sided, with music on both sides of the page.
 - 1. Right-hand pages must be odd-numbered in the upper right-hand corner.
 - 2. Left-hand pages even-numbered in the upper left-hand corner.
- b. Parts layout
 - i. The front page of each part must include the title, composer, (arranger) and instrument name (and instrument key where applicable).
 - ii. Pages to be formatted to enable parts to be printed on A4 (portrait).
 - iii. Recommended part staff size is 6.5mm.
 - iv. The page layout must allow page turns. It is preferable for a multi-measure rest to be at the end of a page. If this is not possible, then a page turn should occur in a period of rest or during an unexposed part of the music.
 - v. Do NOT create parts with multiple instruments on a single staff (for large ensemble works).
- c. Do not rely on default settings in notation programs. These are usually designed to cover a variety of styles and often contain poor choices in some situations. Refer to industry standard references such as *Behind Bars* by Elaine Gould or search for house styles and other notation guidelines (*SCORING EXPRESS* at NYC Music Services is a good place to start).
- d. Meet the deadline (with some time to spare in case of the unexpected).

2. Technical

- a. Correct order of instruments in score
- b. Correct transpositions of instruments
- c. Appropriate registers of instruments
- d. Appropriate voicing within instrumental groups
- e. Correct use of chord symbols and nomenclature
- f. Correct use and placement of double bars (to mark a new section)
- g. Correct use of rehearsal marks and/or section labels, strategically placed at:
 - i. likely starting points during rehearsal
 - ii. the beginning of a new section
 - iii. a change of tempo, character, or texture
 - iv. an important solo entry or a passage with new technical demands
- h. Correct placement of bar numbers (depending on house style)

- i. score – every bar, at the bottom, centred or at the start of each system, above the clef of the top stave, in italics
 - ii. part – at the start of each system, above or below the clef
 - iii. Bar numbers on multirests
- i. Correct and creative use of voice leading

3. Creativity

- a. Write idiomatically, that is, what each instrument does best, either individually or in their families.
- b. Choose accompaniment and textures to suit the style
- c. Ensure the treatment of melody suits the style
- d. Consider blending and balance and ensure that background lines or textures do not get in the way
- e. Reharmonize according to the applicable theory(ies) and chosen style.
- f. Use a variety of instrumental colours and combinations
- g. Don't overscore, i.e. textures too thick and bland, too many instruments playing the same line.
- h. Interesting ways to transition between sections is a good way to add flavour to your arrangement!

4. Exceeding the brief

- a. This is where the best arrangers shine. Consider how you might go above and beyond while still remaining within the resources and spirit of the task.
- b. Can you add an introduction, outro, shout, vamp or another section not in the form of the set work?
- c. Key changes? Treated correctly, i.e. prepared, modulated, confirmed
- d. Time changes, additive metre, extended techniques are welcomed but must not obscure the intent of the original piece. Use to enhance!