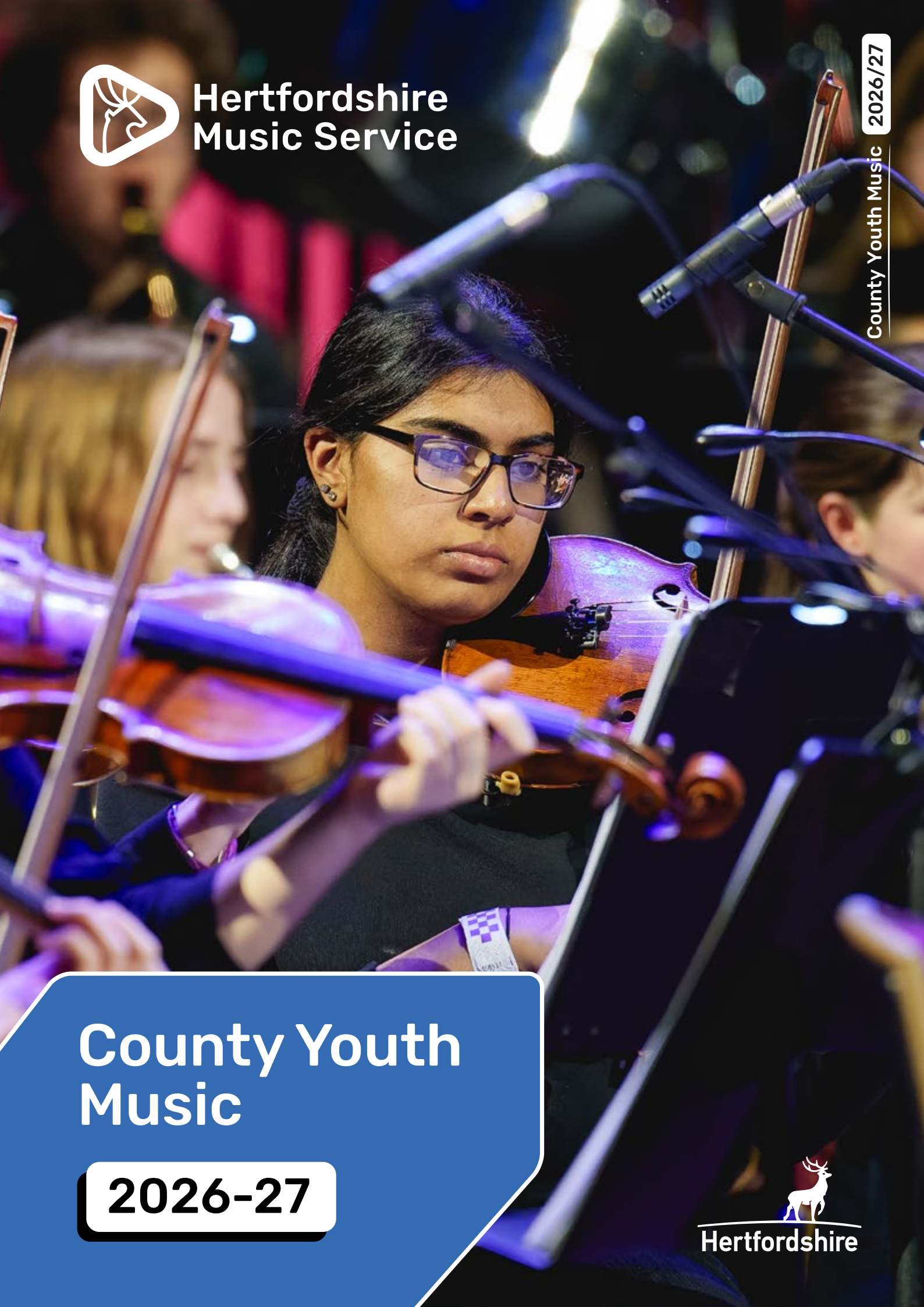




Hertfordshire
Music Service

County Youth Music 2026/27



County Youth Music

2026-27



Hertfordshire

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| Introduction

Welcome to the 2026/27 County Youth Music season!

Hertfordshire Music Service's County Youth Music programme is dedicated to nurturing and supporting young musicians from across the county who demonstrate exceptional talent and commitment.

Our focus is on providing high-quality opportunities for these young artists to further develop their musical abilities and encourage their growth and personal development in the next steps of their musical journey. We have a really exciting year lined up, including the chance to perform a concerto (or movement of), working alongside inspirational professionals of the industry, and more!

By bringing together talented musicians from across the county, we aim to create an environment where they can connect, collaborate, and learn from one another, as well as from expert musicians who provide tuition on the programme.

Our goal is to further bridge the gap between school-based music opportunities and the level of expectation in advanced studies and the music profession.

The County Youth Music team look forward to a fantastic year of musical activities and events in 2026 – 27 and hope to see you there!

Meet the County Youth Music team

- Head of Musical Progression: Sean Law
- Music Development Lead: Katharine Carter
- Project Officer – Events and Courses: Lucy Buckland
- County Events and Courses Coordinator: Katy Roberts

All enquiries to countyyouthmusic@hertfordshire.gov.uk.





| Why apply

Music making at County level enables you to develop confidence in a range of musical skills whilst working in a supportive, yet stimulating environment. The activities, experiences, and coaching on offer are designed to support you in fulfilling your musical potential.

County level music making offers students the opportunity to continue their musical journey, helping to prepare for further study, a life in the music profession, or to keep enjoying music making as a hobby for years to come.

The experiences, friendships, and memories made through county music making stay with people for a lifetime and improve skills that can be transferred into any future opportunities they take.

If this sounds like something you are interested in, then we would love to hear from you.



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"I wish I had joined earlier!"
Heidi, Clarinet

How do I get involved with County Youth Music?

I have lots of experience playing in orchestras, bands or choirs

I have some experience playing in orchestras, bands or choirs

I haven't played in an orchestra, band or choir before

County Youth Orchestra



Hertfordshire Schools' Symphony Orchestra



County Youth Choir



County Experience Days

Open to all musicians!

Look out for opportunities at your local music centre to develop your skills...

Woodwind, Brass and Percussion Festival



Instrument legend



I play a woodwind instrument



I play a brass instrument



I play a string instrument



I play percussion



I play a keyboard instrument



I play a guitar or bass guitar



I sing

Hertfordshire County Youth Orchestra

Hertfordshire County Youth Orchestra is an orchestra for advanced strings, woodwind, brass and percussion players in Hertfordshire. The orchestra members are confident musicians, with a wealth of experience in ensemble playing, having reached the highest level of ensemble experience within our county. Members have often progressed into the orchestra from HSSO as a next step in their orchestral development and many members continue their membership with HCYO up to the age of 21.

As a member of HCYO, you will experience repertoire and opportunities designed to develop confidence in your orchestral skills at the highest level of county music making. Each HCYO course offers the opportunity to work alongside professional conductors and experienced sectional tutors, including professional orchestral musicians from around the UK.

Dates for 2026/27

Autumn term

- Dates: 19th - 22nd December 2026 (with performance on 22nd December 2026)
- Conducted by Peter Stark
- Repertoire: Vaughan Williams: Symphony no. 2 (A London Symphony)

📍 Rehearsal and concert venue to be announced on Friday 3 July 2026

Spring term

- Dates: 29th March - 1st April 2027 (with performance on 1st April 2027)
- Conducted by Peter Stark
- Repertoire: Beethoven - Symphony no. 3 (Eroica) and concerto

📍 Rehearsal and concert venue to be announced on Friday 3 July 2026

Summer term

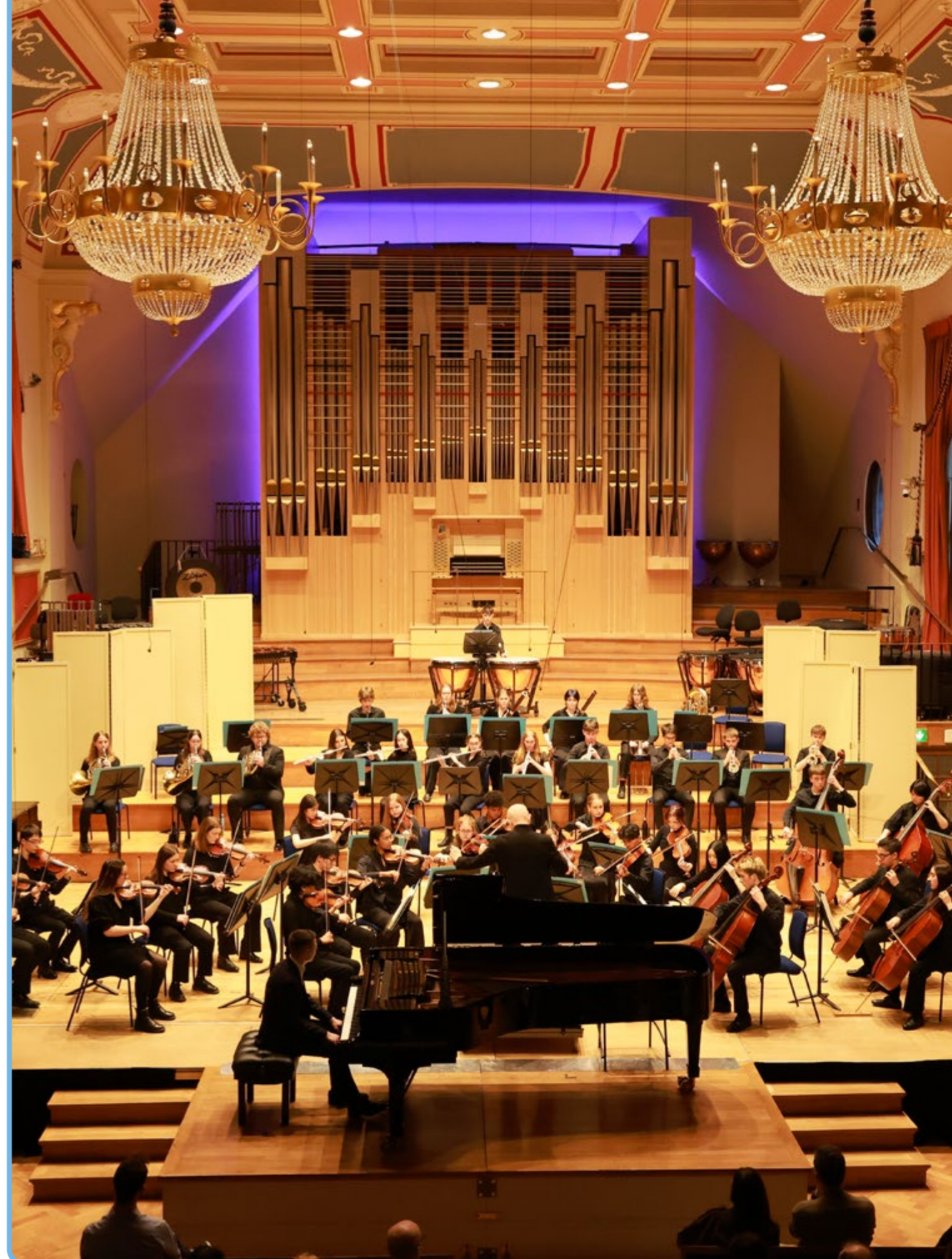
- Dates: 20th - 27th August 2027
- Conducted by Peter Stark

The orchestra's summer 2027 plans are for a combined HCYO and HSSO tour. This will depend on the level of interest from this year's members. We encourage you to look out for our expression of interest form, which will be shared on **Friday 24 July 2026** to all applicants.

If a tour is not viable, we will deliver a UK-based course and concert on the same dates. Whether abroad or in the UK, summer 27 provides an exciting opportunity to immerse yourself in a staple of the orchestral repertoire - Mahler's Symphony No. 1.



Scan me to learn more






Hertfordshire Schools' Symphony Orchestra

The Hertfordshire Schools' Symphony Orchestra is one of two auditioned county youth orchestras and welcomes instrumentalists from a range of disciplines. Members of the orchestra are confident musicians who are capable of performing demanding repertoire, who will have played in their area youth orchestras or been involved in similar orchestral opportunities up to the age of 18. Performing in HSSO gives the opportunity to learn varied repertoire and work with experienced conductors and sectional tutors, whilst developing your orchestral skills and confidence.

Dates for 2026/27


Autumn term

- Dates: 26th October – 29th October 2026 (with performance on 29th October 2026)
- Conducted by Patrick Bailey
- Programme to feature Saint Saëns - Danse Macabre, Danny Elfman - The Nightmare Before Christmas and other dark and humorous tales!

 Rehearsal and concert venue to be announced on Friday 3 July 2026

Spring term

- Dates: 6th – 9th April 2027 (with performance on 9th April 2027)
- Conducted by Patrick Bailey
- Programme to feature Dvořák – Symphony no. 8

 Rehearsal and concert venue to be announced on Friday 3 July 2026

Summer term

- Dates: 20th – 27th August 2027
- Conducted by Peter Stark

The orchestra's summer 2027 plans are for a combined HCYO and HSSO tour. This will depend on the level of interest from this year's members. We encourage you to look out for our expression of interest form, which will be shared on **Friday 24 July 2026** to all applicants.

If a tour is not viable, we will deliver a UK-based course and concert on the same dates. Whether abroad or in the UK, summer 27 provides an exciting opportunity to immerse yourself in a staple of the orchestral repertoire – Mahler's Symphony No. 1.



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Hertfordshire County Youth Choir

Hertfordshire County Youth Choir welcomes all young vocalists from year 9 and above who aspire to engage with high quality and varied choral repertoire alongside other likeminded singers from across Hertfordshire. HCYC meet for weekly rehearsals and offer inspiring performance opportunities throughout the year. Participating in HCYC supports your abilities as a singer in an ensemble, and provides opportunity for developing your sight reading, aural skills, solo performance, and conducting skills. The choir is run by conductor, singer and educator **James Slimings**.

Dates for 2026/27

Autumn term

- Weekly rehearsals begin Wednesday 16th September 2026
- Saturday 12th December 2026 – winter concert
with choirs from West Herts supported by the Janet Hammond Foundation

📍 Concert venue to be announced on Friday 3 July 2026

Spring term

- Weekly rehearsals begin Wednesday 6th January 2027
- Saturday 20th March 2027 – spring concert

📍 Concert venue to be announced on Friday 3 July 2026

Summer term

- Weekly rehearsals begin Wednesday 14th April 2027
- Saturday 10th July 2027 – summer concert
- 26th – 30th July 2027 – summer course (performance on 30th July 2027)

📍 Rehearsal and concert venue to be announced on Friday 3 July 2026



Hertfordshire County Youth Choir scholarship opportunity

We are pleased to offer choral scholarship opportunities for seven students in the Hertfordshire County Youth Choir for the 2026/2027 academic year. These scholarships include 33 weeks of 20-minute singing lessons for the funded* students.

This opportunity has been generously funded by the Chipperfield Choral Society Hammond Award, creating a legacy of vocal excellence in the Chipperfield area and enabling young singers to further develop their vocal skills and musical interests. Applications are welcomed from new and current County Youth Choir members who are local to the **Watford, Dacorum, or Three Rivers** areas. Please note that this is an auditioned opportunity. Applicants will need to submit a video recording along with a written statement explaining why they would like to be considered (details below).

There is also an opportunity to develop musical leadership skills as part of the scholarship, for example by acting as an SATB section leader within the choir or leading the warm-ups. The deadline for video submissions is Saturday 18 July 2026, and applicants will be notified of the outcome by Friday 10 September 2026.

*Please note that scholarships are 50% funded and do not cover holiday courses or potential residential trips.

How to apply

Please complete the below application form by Saturday 18 July 2026.

1. How would this opportunity contribute to your future education or career in music?
2. What is your favourite thing about singing with others?
3. What are your strengths as an ensemble singer?
4. What is your favourite piece of choral music?

This should be accompanied by one verse of a song performed a cappella (without piano or backing track). Recording on a phone will provide sufficient quality.

As part of the funding requirements, successful candidates will be expected to attend all rehearsals and concerts throughout the year.



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| **Woodwind, Brass and Percussion Festival**

Dates: 17th – 19th February 2027 (performance on 19th February)

The Hertfordshire County Youth Woodwind, Brass and Percussion Festival is open to all woodwind, brass and percussion players from across Hertfordshire, and welcomes confident young musicians who demonstrate strong technical and expressive skills, and have significant ensemble experience. These musicians are capable of performing demanding repertoire and have had regular experience contributing at a high level within regional or specialised ensembles, up to the age of 21.

Across this three day festival you will discover, rehearse and perform a wide range of repertoire. You will be working with experienced conductors and professional musicians who will work to support you in developing your performance skills as both individuals and within an ensemble. This celebration will provide high-quality musical opportunities to inspire members to reach their musical goals and to encourage the growth and personal development of the individuals we work with.

If you have any questions about whether this opportunity is right for you, please get in touch with the County Youth Music team on countyyouthmusic@hertfordshire.gov.uk.



| **County Experience Days**

County Experience Days provide the opportunity for young musicians in Hertfordshire to gain confidence and experience with county level music-making.

Each of our experience days has a unique musical focus, allowing young musicians across a range of experience levels to access an experience day relevant to them and their musical development.

Whether you are an existing county musician looking to broaden your knowledge or looking to take your first step into the world of county level music-making, keep an eye out for one-off experience days when they're announced!

County Experience Days take place across the academic year. Fees are dependent on the type of County Experience Day and are always advertised as part of the event description.



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How to apply

All new and returning members will need to complete the online application form to participate in county-level music activities in 2026/27.

There are some short questions about your level of playing experience which you'll need to complete – this is so we can get to know you as a musician! If you have an existing SpeedAdmin account, please log in with your credentials when prompted, otherwise please create a new account as part of the sign-up process.

Please note that when you add your membership to cart, you will not be charged at this point. You will be invoiced for the ensemble(s) once your place is confirmed via email from the County Youth Music team.

Our sign up deadline for on time applications is **Saturday 18th July 2026**. After this, late applications are welcomed at any point during the year, although places are then subject to availability, and you may be placed on a waiting or reserve list.

Signing up before the deadline of 18th July ensures you have access to a full year of opportunities, any relevant membership discount(s), and the opportunity to apply for principal positions in our auditioned ensembles.

If you have any questions at any point completing the application form, please don't hesitate to contact the County Youth Music team by emailing countyouthmusic@hertfordshire.gov.uk.



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Auditions

The Hertfordshire Schools' Symphony Orchestra and the Hertfordshire County Youth Orchestra are both auditioned ensembles. Preparing and submitting audition tapes is great experience for your musical life after your time in our county ensembles.

Audition videos are required if:

- You are a new applicant to either of our county-level orchestras
- A member of HSSO wishing to apply for HCYO
- A returning member who cannot make the trial day session

Please note that although you can audition for both ensembles you will only be offered a place in one or the other, if successful.

We look for confident musicians with orchestral experience to join the orchestras. If you have worked on graded exams, grade 6/7+ for HSSO, and grade 8+ for HCYO is a good guide for the playing standard of each orchestra.

Once you've filled out the application form and indicated that you'd like to apply for HSSO and/or HCYO, you can begin preparing a short video submission. This comprises of:

- A 3–5-minute piece of your choice (this can be accompanied or unaccompanied)
- 2 x orchestral excerpts provided online, **or** 2 x approved exam board excerpts*

**As an alternative to the provided excerpts, you may substitute either one or both excerpts with any listed on the Trinity College grade 7 or 8 exam syllabus for your instrument(s). Please note that if choosing to submit an audition using an excerpt from the Trinity syllabus you must ensure you provide a scanned copy of the chosen excerpt to accompany your submission.*

Full details (including excerpts) can be found via the link on page 20.

How to submit an audition video

Once you have completed the online application form on page 18, please submit your audition video as an unlisted YouTube video using the below link by **Saturday 18 July 2026**. You'll hear back regarding the outcome of your audition video by **Friday 4 September 2026**. If successful, you'll be invited to take part in our trial day on **Sunday 13 September 2026**.

Our trial day is designed as a next step in our audition and application process for both the Hertfordshire Schools' Symphony Orchestra and County Youth Orchestra, and to help inform seating positions for the academic year.

Please note that an invitation to the trial day does not automatically confirm your place in HSSO/ HCYO, and final places will be confirmed via email after the trial day.



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Video audition guidance

- Uploading your video as 'unlisted' rather than 'public' means that your audition tape is only available to the recipients of the link. This is the most effective and secure way to share your audition with us!
- Please list the piece and excerpts you have chosen in the description of the YouTube video.
- Ensure you are clearly visible in the middle of the camera frame and arrange the camera and lighting so that you and your instrument are clearly visible. For string players, ensure that the bow and fingerboard are in full view.
- Make sure the sound is as clear as possible – don't cover up your device's microphone!

Audition FAQs

What if I already play in HSSO or HCYO and want to continue as I am?

If you already play in either HSSO or HCYO and want to continue, then you do not need to send in an audition tape. However, it's important that you still complete the application form and attend the trial day.

What if I already play in HSSO but think that I'm ready to move up to HCYO, or to have the chance to play in a principal position?

Please indicate this in your application form. We will require an audition tape as this would be a new ensemble for you, and it is important that you attend the trial day.

Can I audition for both?

Yes, you can indicate that you would be happy to be considered for either ensemble, but if you are successful then you'll be offered a place in one of the orchestras.

We may also invite you to take part in trial sessions for both HSSO and HCYO following your application/audition. This will be communicated to you by Friday 4 September.

What if I can't attend the trial day?

The trial day is an important part of the process for ensuring everybody is in the right position in the orchestra for their development. We would encourage everybody to make the best efforts to be available, otherwise it may impact the seating position for the year. Reach out to the team as early as possible if you have any concerns.



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Fees

Our termly fees are set to be able to cover all costs of running our county activities, such as hire of venues, conductors, tutors, and music hire. Our standard fees exclude food, drink, and transport unless otherwise stated.

Commitment to the ensemble is important. We expect all members to commit and be at all courses for the ensemble(s) they sign up for. Our fees are designed to reward this commitment, and so if you attend terms 1 & 2 you will be eligible for the membership discount reflected in term 3.

If you get a place in one of our auditioned orchestras (HCYO or HSSO) and want to also sign up for another ensemble or festival, then the fee for this extra ensemble will be reduced to an 'add on fee', to make it more manageable to join more than one. Please see our table below for all fees.

| | Termly fee | Term 3 annual member fee* | Add on fee (for those with HSSO or HCYO membership) |
|---|-----------------|---------------------------|---|
| Hertfordshire County Youth Orchestra | £230 per term | £122 | N/A |
| Hertfordshire Schools' Symphony Orchestra | £210 per term | £100 | N/A |
| Hertfordshire County Youth Choir | £135 per term | N/A | £66 per term |
| Wind, Brass and Percussion Festival | £200 course fee | N/A | N/A |

* This discounted rate is for the termly fee in term 3 will be automatically applied to all members who have attended and paid for term 1 and 2. An additional tour participation fee will be applied for the proposed orchestra tour in term 3. Further details and confirmation of this will be shared once we have collated the expression of interest.

Fees are invoiced at the beginning of each term. Please note that once your place has been confirmed for the year, you'll be automatically invoiced each term unless you provide advance notice at the earliest opportunity for any courses you cannot attend. Providing this advance notice allows us to offer places to other young musicians on our reserve lists.

Financial assistance

Friends of Hertfordshire County Youth Music is able to provide support to those who meet criteria for some financial assistance schemes. Please contact countyouthmusic@hertfordshire.gov.uk to find out more about eligibility and how to apply.

Course information

Preparation

You should always arrive at rehearsals and concerts with your parts well prepared. This will allow you the best platform to advance your own skills and support the development of the ensemble.

We encourage you to familiarise yourself with your parts and the scores as this gives you the opportunity to practice with your teacher in case you are unsure of any passages in the music.

Listening to recordings of the music in advance will also help you with recognising entries, understanding different tempi, and getting a feel of the different sound worlds that the repertoire uses.

What to bring

What to bring with you to rehearsals and County Music Courses:

- Your instrument/voice!
- Food and drink for each day of the course
- 2b pencil – any soft lead pencil will be fine, but 2b is the industry standard
- Relevant accessories (such as mutes, rosin, spike holders, instrument stands etc.)
- Doubling instrument

Music and stands will always be provided, unless specified otherwise. If you require additional instruments for one of our courses (such as A Clarinets, piccolos, contra bassoon), then please get in touch and we can discuss the options available.

Timekeeping

It is important that for any rehearsal or concert you arrive ready to play at the rehearsal start times. Arriving between 20 and 30 minutes before a rehearsal begins will provide most instrumentalists the time they need to sign in, prepare their instrument, and warm up before the ensemble tunes and begins. Singers should also arrive in ample time to guarantee a good vocal warm up.

Ensuring that you are seated after any breaks also allows everyone to achieve the most out of the rehearsal time available. These professional level standards prepare our group members for the standards not only set by the music industry, but across other industries.

We appreciate that sometimes players may be late to rehearsal due to circumstances outside of their control – all we ask is that you give us a call to let us know on the day, using the details we provide you ahead of the course.

Concert information

For most of our courses, there will be performance opportunities for the students to demonstrate the repertoire they have rehearsed. These can vary from informal open rehearsals to formal evening concerts.

Our formal concerts are often ticketed events; audience members will have the opportunity to purchase e-tickets and links for these will be shared in advance of the event. Performers will be required to wear smart black concert clothes for our formal performances.

If you have any questions about the course, you can always get in touch with the County Youth Music team by emailing countyyouthmusic@hertfordshire.gov.uk. We are always happy to help you get the most out of each course you attend.

“My son had the best time learning, practising and playing with you all. It has been such a joy to see him so happy and hear his stories about the day. I know that his confidence and skills have really grown as a result of the experience.”

Parent

County Youth Music key dates

2027

2026

July

- 3rd: Concert venues announced
- 18th: On-time applications deadline

September

- 4th: Audition outcomes confirmed to applicants
- 10th: HCYC scholarship outcomes confirmed to applicants
- 13th: HSSO and HCYO trial day
- 16th: HCYC weekly rehearsals begin

October

- 26 - 29th: HSSO autumn course

December

- 12th: HCYC winter concert, with choirs from West Herts
- 19 - 22nd: HCYO autumn course

January

- 6th: HCYC weekly rehearsals begin

February

- 17 - 19th: Brass, Woodwind & Percussion Festival

March & April

- 20th March: HCYC spring concert
- 29 March - 1st April: HCYO spring course
- 6 - 9th April: HSSO spring course
- 14th April: HCYC weekly rehearsals begin

July

- 10th: HCYC summer concert
- 26 - 30th: HCYC summer course

August

- 20 - 27th: HCYO & HSSO combined summer tour



Dates are subject to change throughout the year.
For the latest information, visit hertsmusicservice.org.uk/countyyouthmusic

| Frequently asked questions

How do I know which ensemble is right for me?

Please refer to our ensemble flow chart, which will guide you towards which ensemble may be right for you. If you're unsure we would much rather hear from you than not, and we can always help direct you to another regional ensemble if we feel you're not quite ready.

Please get in touch with countyyouthmusic@hertfordshire.gov.uk if you have any questions about this.

I already play in HSSO or HCYO. Do I need to reaudition to stay in the ensemble?

No, you will not have to submit an audition video to stay in the same ensemble you already play in – but you will need to be available for the trial day so we can make sure we get you seated in the right place within the orchestra.

Please see 'Auditions' on page 19 for further information.

I'm in HSSO and would like to audition for HCYO – what steps do I need to take?

You will need to submit a video audition in this case.

Please see 'Auditions' on page 19 for further information.

What happens on the HSSO and HCYO trial day?

Our trial day is designed as a next step in our audition and application process for both the Hertfordshire Schools' Symphony Orchestra and County Youth Orchestra. Please note that an invitation to the trial day does not automatically confirm your place in HSSO/HCYO. It is an opportunity for us to help find the best place in the orchestra to support your development.

Our course tutors may ask you to move around and sit in different seats within your section, and will try different players in Principal or Sub-Principal positions to get a sense of your leadership skills. Not all players will be trialled in every seating position within your section, and you will only be trialled for a principal position if it is something you have indicated on your application and/or comfortable with.

We may also invite you to take part in trial sessions for both HSSO and HCYO following your application/audition. This will be communicated to you by **Friday 4th September 2026**.

I have never taken part in a County Youth Music programme and I'm not sure I'm at the right level or have the right experience to become a member.

The best thing to do is to sign up or get in touch – our County Youth Music programmes are a really supportive environment and we will do whatever we can to support you on the next steps of your musical journey. For auditioned groups, even if the opportunity isn't right for you just yet, you will gain useful experience and feedback being involved in the process.

I am really interested in auditioning, but I can't make the trial day or one of the course dates – what should I do?

Please get in touch with countyyouthmusic@hertfordshire.gov.uk to discuss your specific situation.

What happens if I'm signed up for a course and can't make it?

Commitment in music is important; not only for your own personal development but also for the support of the others around you in the orchestra. We understand that plans change, and sometimes you can't attend a course due to reasons beyond your control. However, it's important that you inform us as soon as possible, so that we can offer your seat to someone on the reserve list.

Not paying your invoice isn't enough to indicate that you aren't able to attend, and you must inform us in writing, by emailing countyyouthmusic@hertfordshire.gov.uk.



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