

MENZA Conference 2025: A Celebration of Music Education

The MENZA Conference 2025, held at Massey University Wellington from 7-9 July, brought together music educators from across Aotearoa for three inspiring days of learning, collaboration, and celebration. From early childhood through to secondary and tertiary levels, the conference showcased the vibrant diversity of music education in our communities.

The conference opened with a powerful mihi whakatau, setting the tone for a gathering that honoured both te ao Māori and diverse cultural perspectives throughout.

The Tai Oro Wananga Model, presented by Horomona Horo, Christian McDonald, Wiremu Sarich, and Priya Gain, provided a compelling keynote that wove through multiple workshops, demonstrating the practical application of culturally responsive teaching.

International guest presenters brought fresh perspectives and excitement. Children's entertainment icon Suzy Cato

captivated attendees with her insights, while Australian guests Jessie Lloyd and Emily Wilson shared the remarkable Torres Strait Songbook, connecting educators with Indigenous Australian song traditions. These international connections enriched our understanding of music education in the Pacific region.

The workshop programme offered something for everyone, with over 25 sessions spanning early childhood education through to NCEA assessment. Participants explored everything from creating backing tracks and using AI tools, to te reo Māori resources for Matariki, DJ workshops, and





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Conference
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self-regulated learning in music studios. The practical focus of sessions like "Recording on a Budget" and "Music Ecademy" provided teachers with immediately applicable skills for their classrooms.

Cultural connections remained central throughout the conference. Workshops on Pasifika sasa siva with Kathie Matamua, tāonga tākaro with Wiremu Sarich and Anna Tripp, and the Tangata Whenua Educators Hui demonstrated MENZA's commitment to supporting diverse voices in music education. The Tuesday sector hui provided valuable space for early childhood, primary, and secondary educators to discuss advocacy and sector-specific challenges.

Beyond the formal programme, the conference created meaningful opportunities for connection. Trade tables showcased resources and innovations, while social gatherings featured live music from talented performers, including Lucy Summerfield, River Hann-Ellen, and DJ Martin Emo. The highlight for many was the screening of *Tina!* the

movie with an introduction by Dr. Igelese Ete, and the conference dinner at Naumi Hotel with band Sweetest Taboo.

Keynote speaker Peter O'Connor on the final day brought the conference full circle, leaving participants energised and inspired. The prize draw and poroporoaki provided a fitting close to a conference that celebrated our music education community's strength, creativity, and commitment to our tamariki and rangatahi.

As we left Wellington, we carried with us new connections, fresh ideas, and renewed passion for music education in Aotearoa. The photos tell the story of laughter, learning, and the joy of coming together as a community dedicated to transforming lives through music.





