



The Youth Orchestra of Greater Columbus

Student & Parent Handbook

2023-2024 Orchestra Season

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Welcome!

It is a pleasure to welcome all new and returning students and your families to the Youth Orchestra of Greater Columbus (YOGC). We look forward to your participation in this program, one that is designed to offer you the best possible musical experience. It is our hope that you will work hard to take full advantage of your membership by attending rehearsals faithfully and practicing your parts diligently. As you know, every musical ensemble is only as good as the people in it. We trust that you will join with us to endeavor to make the Youth Orchestra of Greater Columbus a valuable part of your musical life.

This handbook contains most of the information you will need in order to be successful in the YOGC. Please, along with your parents, read it carefully. The Appendix contains a letter of agreement stating that you have done so.

Thank you for your interest in orchestral music and the YOGC program. We look forward to working with you.

The Youth Orchestra Story

In May of 1993, Lynn Whiddon and Charlynn Kerr approached George Del Gobbo with the idea of restarting a youth orchestra program in the city of Columbus. Previous programs had been operated under the aegis of the Columbus Symphony Orchestra. The most recent such program had been suspended two years earlier for financial and other reasons. Interested community members met and decided to proceed with a new, independent youth orchestra program to be called the Youth Orchestra of Greater Columbus.

A Board of Directors was recruited, a conductor was hired, and the process of assembling an orchestra began. It was decided to start with a string orchestra comprised of young musicians of middle school age. The strategy was to build the program around this beginning group as they progressed through school. After two years winds and percussion were added to the original string section, and a new group of younger string players were auditioned. This, more or less, defined the program as it exists today: a Youth Symphony Orchestra and a String Orchestra. More recently a summer string camp, a comprehensive chamber music program, violin ensemble, and an orchestra festival have been instituted.

Currently the program serves more than one hundred young musicians from over thirty area public, private, and home schools. Members reside in eight counties in Georgia and Alabama. The YOGC is supported and administered by a Board of Directors whose responsibilities include shaping the orchestra's philosophy and operational goals and assuring that the organization maintains strong financial support. The Board employs a Music Director/Conductor, Associate Conductor, and an Executive Director whose function it is to oversee the daily musical and administrative work of the program.

Mission

To teach young people about music. To provide the opportunity for young instrumentalists to have the highest quality musical experience in an orchestral setting. To foster the discipline and life skills necessary to be successful in music, recognizing that this discipline is invaluable in life and other pursuits. To instill a sense of value of the arts as an enrichment in every aspect of life.

Providing an opportunity for young people to learn, perform, and enjoy classical music!

Organization

The Youth Orchestra of Greater Columbus includes a number of component parts.

The Youth Symphony Orchestra

The Youth Symphony Orchestra is a full orchestra comprised of intermediate and advanced middle and high school students. This ensemble performs music from the standard orchestral repertoire. Typically this orchestra plays four major concerts per season, but additional performances may be added.

The String Orchestra

The String Orchestra includes younger players for whom, in some cases, this may be their first major ensemble experience. The focus here is more on individual technique and learning to function as an ensemble in a large group. Typically, this orchestra performs three to four major concerts per season, almost always on the same program as the Youth Symphony Orchestra.

The Chamber Music Program

All members of the Youth Symphony Orchestra are eligible for inclusion in the chamber music program. At the discretion of the Music Director, ensembles are formed in any or all of the various instrument families: strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion. These ensembles rehearse independently and receive private coaching sessions from guest artists hired by YOGC. Chamber ensembles are often called upon to play at various functions around the community at various times of the season. This activity is coordinated by the Music Director and the Executive Director.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is a volunteer group of local citizens who recognize the value and support the mission & goals of the YOGC. The full Board & an Executive Committee drawn from its members meet regularly to fulfill their obligation to the organization by assuring its financial security & overseeing the progress of the orchestra as described in its bylaws.

OFFICERS

Kathleen Mullins, President
Jill Honeycutt, Vice President
Amy Walters, Immediate Past-President
Joseph Brannan, Treasurer
Gladys Williams-Tillmon, Secretary

BOARD

Michael Cater
George Del Gobbo
Dr. Bonnie Ellis
Amy Harkness
Edson Jean-Jacques
Jim Koan
Karen Lewis
Steve Slater
Dr. Karen Stuart
Matt Whiddon

Staff

Rachel Morway, Executive Director
James Palmer, Music Director and Conductor
Jessica French, Associate Conductor

Contact Information

Address: P.O. Box 8612, Columbus, GA 31908
Telephone: 706-256-3614
Fax: 706-649-7369
Email: info@yogc.org

Parents' Organization

All parents of YOGC members are de facto members of the Parents' Organization. The orchestra counts on the volunteer efforts of parents in such important areas as fundraising, concert production, receptions, rehearsal and performance set up, community outreach, public relations, making social media contacts, and other general assistance as needed by the administrative staff. YOGC will reach out as needed for volunteers throughout the season and may call meetings of the Parents' Organization as needed.

The YOGC Board of Directors includes a parent board member who acts as a liaison between parents and the board. They must be a parent of a student currently in YOGC. They will assist with the coordination of parent volunteer opportunities and communication between the board and parents. Our parent representative on the Board of Directors is Amy Harkness. To contact her regarding the Parent's Organization, her email is amyharkness@hotmail.com.

Volunteers

Throughout the year the YOGC is dependent on the contributions of time and talent by its many capable volunteers. Any interested member of the community is welcome. This includes parents, grandparents, non-parents, and any students looking to fulfill volunteer service hour requirements. Areas of need include: concert production (and all of its ancillary activities, such as setting up, cleaning up afterwards, assisting both in the lobby and backstage, helping to move equipment to concert venues, etc.), assisting in the office (to include preparation of sheet music, preparing and executing mailings, delivering posters, brochures, and flyers, etc.), and other general duties. Anyone with any amount of time to donate is welcome. Please contact the Executive Director at info@yogc.org for more information.

Rules and Procedures

Auditions and Evaluations

Every student will be required to audition each year, regardless of past participation. All auditions are held at the Schwob School of Music in the RiverCenter complex at 900 Broadway in Columbus. Auditions are held during the months of May, June, and August. Any variance of time or location will be communicated in advance to prospective auditionees. In order to register for an audition, each student must complete the online application form providing the following and other pertinent information:

- Name and contact information
- Instrument
- Experience
- School
- Photo/Video release form
- Signed commitment form
- A non-refundable \$10 audition fee is due upon registration.

Audition Requirements

Youth Symphony Orchestra

Players, of any age, should be able to compete at, or near, the all-state high school level.

Scales, with beautiful tone, quarter note = 88:

- Violin-----Three octaves---G, A, Bb, C (Choose any two.)
- Viola/Cello-----Three octaves---C, D, Eb, F (Choose any two.)
- Bass-----Two octaves---E, F, G, A, Bb, C (Choose any two.)
- Woodwinds/Brass----Play two scales of your choice. One lyrical and one All State style.
- Percussion-----Play three chromatically adjacent scales on a keyboard instrument.

Solo:

- Strings/Woodwinds/Brass----Prepare and perform any solo of your choice. Include both lyrical and technical passages.
- Percussion----Prepare and perform a solo OR excerpt on all of the following instruments: snare drum, timpani, any keyboard instrument.

Sight Reading:

- Auditionees will be asked to read at sight a composition that is appropriate to the requirements of the Youth Symphony Orchestra.
- Students will be given 30 seconds to look over a short excerpt and then will be asked to play it to the best of their ability.

String Orchestra

Players should have at least one year of school orchestra or private lessons.

Scales, with beautiful tone, quarter note = 88:

- Violin/Viola/Cello---Two octaves---C, D, F, G, A (Choose any two.)
- Bass-----One octave---E, F, G, A, C (Choose any two.)

Solo:

- Prepare and perform any solo of your choice. Include both lyrical and technical passages. The Suzuki Series is an excellent resource.

Sight Reading:

- Auditionees will be asked to read at sight a composition that is appropriate to the requirements of the String Orchestra. Students will be given 30 seconds to look over a short excerpt and then will be asked to play it to the best of their ability.

Tuition and Financial Aid

Annual tuition for all YOGC members is \$400 per year. An initial payment must be made by the first rehearsal date of the season. All tuition is to be paid by December 15 of each season. Tuition is non-refundable and must be paid in full by December 15.

Students participating in chamber music ensembles will be charged a fee of \$25 per year.

YOGC provides partial financial aid to families with a demonstrated need. It is a founding precept of the orchestra that no student will be excluded for economic reasons. To apply, download the form from www.yogc.org and give a completed copy to the Executive Director. The deadline to submit financial aid applications is the date of the first rehearsal for the main season and June 1 for the Summer String Camp. Rare exceptions may be made at the sole discretion of the Executive Director.

Each family is encouraged to participate in general YOGC fundraising activities. These can include everything from making a gift to the annual fund or Georgia Gives Day, to seeking matching gifts from employers, to helping YOGC Board and staff members make contact with potential sponsors or donors, etc.

Orientation

At the beginning of each season, parents and students are required to attend an orientation meeting at the beginning of the Season Kick-Off Student Retreat. This gives a chance for YOGC staff members to share information and expectations about the upcoming season in person.

Rehearsals and Performances

All students participating in the program are expected to attend all program activities. This includes all rehearsals, concerts, and chamber music performances where applicable.

Rehearsal Procedures and Etiquette

Arrival/Departure---Do not arrive for rehearsal more than twenty minutes before the scheduled time. Likewise, please arrange for post-rehearsal transportation no later than twenty minutes after the scheduled end of the rehearsal. There will be no adult supervision at the rehearsal site more than twenty minutes before or after scheduled events.

Students must sign the attendance sheet upon arrival at each rehearsal.

Students should be in their seats, warmed up, music out, with a pencil, ready to play five minutes before scheduled rehearsal times and after rehearsal breaks. If this is not the case, you will be considered tardy. Three instances of tardiness will equal one absence.

Students coming to rehearsal without their music will be charged with an unexcused absence.

Late arrivals to and early departures from rehearsals are disruptive and are strongly discouraged.

Please notify the Executive Director if you will be absent from a rehearsal. This should be done no later than 4:00 PM on the Friday before the rehearsal in question. The only acceptable excuses for missing a rehearsal are a family emergency, an illness that results in absence from school on the day of the rehearsal, or school functions that are submitted and approved by the Executive Director and Music Director at least 10 business days prior to the conflict. In the case of illness, you should notify the Executive Director as soon as possible on that day. If no one is available at the YOGC office, you may leave a message on the answering machine or send an email to info@yogc.org.

Any other circumstances, aside from those given above, which might result in absence from a rehearsal, should be discussed with the Executive Director.

Penalties: More than two unexcused absences per semester will result in dismissal from the orchestra (without refund of tuition). This rule will be strictly enforced.

Music: At the beginning of the season each student will be given a music folder. Orchestra parts (sheet music) will be distributed throughout the season. Students are responsible for maintaining both the folder and the orchestra parts during the season. Lost music can be replaced - however, please do your best to bring your music to every rehearsal.

All players are expected to prepare their parts at home before coming to rehearsal, so that rehearsal time may be spent on broader music concepts. All players are also expected to spend extra time on particular passages as assigned by their section coaches or conductor.

Players who are continually unprepared may be reseated or dismissed from the orchestra at the discretion of the Music Director.

Rehearsals are conducted in a professional manner. Students are expected to reflect that fact by being respectful, courteous, and considerate toward the conductor, orchestra staff, and all other orchestra members at all times. Such behavior includes being attentive when your section is not playing, and not talking, chewing gum or being otherwise disruptive in any way.

Offensive language, jokes, or bullying will not be tolerated. Anyone violating this principle will be subject to expulsion from the orchestra.

Only water is permitted in the rehearsal rooms. No food or drinks of any kind are permitted on the RiverCenter stage.

Cell phone usage is prohibited during rehearsals and performances. Phones must be turned off and put away.

The above rules and regulations are a basic guide to correct behavior in an orchestral setting and represent minimum expectations. Failure to comply will result in the following disciplinary actions:

- Minor infractions: First offense---Meeting with the Music Director
Second Offense---Music Director reports to parents
Third Offense---Expulsion from the program
- Major infractions: Immediate removal from the rehearsal/concert and review by the Music Director and Executive Director which may lead to expulsion from the program.

Concert Procedures and Etiquette

All students will report to the concert venue at the time designated by the Conductor for sound checks and possible rehearsals. Such call times will be announced one-to-two weeks in advance of each concert.

No drinks of any kind are permitted on concert stages.

An unexcused absence from a dress rehearsal may, at the Conductor's discretion, result in a player's exclusion from the concert performance.

Concert Dress Code

In an effort to maintain a uniform appearance, the following dress code for concerts is mandated:

- *Youth Symphony Orchestra:*
 - Ladies: Black dress or black skirt with black top (hemline below the knees when sitting; $\frac{3}{4}$ or long sleeves)
 - All black, closed-toe shoes
 - No large or visually distracting jewelry.

 - Men: Black suit, black tuxedo, or black pants with long-sleeved black shirt (all black, no patterns or other colors)
 - Black socks and shoes
 - No large or visually distracting jewelry
-
- *String Orchestra/Violin Ensemble:*
 - Ladies and Men: White tops, black bottoms
 - Closed-toe black shoes
 - Black socks for the men

On occasion casual dress will be acceptable for performances, as directed by the Conductor and Executive Director. In these cases, casual dress will consist of a current youth orchestra t-shirt and jeans.

Items of dress not permitted include: open-toed shoes, athletic shoes, shorts, sleeveless or spaghetti strap tops, and low necklines.

Concert Etiquette for Audiences

Family and friends should make an effort to be seated in the hall before the start of the concert. Doors usually open about thirty minutes before the concert start time. Walking around the hall during the performance, unless in an emergency situation, is distracting to performers and audience alike and, for that reason, is inappropriate.

All cell phones should be turned off and put away during any concert.

The YOGC would prefer that you do not applaud between movements of a multi-movement work. Using your concert program as a guide and watching the conductor at the ends of pieces can help you to know when it's time for applause. However, we realize that, occasionally, your pride in and enthusiasm for your child's performance may override your restraint and cause you to clap at what, some might say, is the wrong time. It's okay. The orchestra treasures your applause and revels in your approval.

The Chamber Music Program

At the beginning of each season interested students are chosen by the Music Director, based on skill level and compatibility, and assigned to small ensemble groups. These include string quartet, woodwind quintet, and brass quartet or quintet. All percussionists are assigned to and included in the percussion ensemble. This program includes a weekly private one-hour coaching session, a one-hour rehearsal each week, and offers the opportunity for performances throughout the year both at youth orchestra events and in the community. All chamber ensemble performances will be coordinated by the Executive Director.

All the previously stated rules and procedures apply also to participation in a chamber music ensemble. Once a performance has been agreed to, only an emergency will justify a player's release from said performance. In that case the player in question must immediately apprise the Executive Director of the situation, be responsible for finding a suitable substitute musician, and providing that person with the necessary music and performance information.

Schedule of Rehearsals and Performances

Rehearsals are held most Monday evenings from September through April at the Schwob School of Music at 900 Broadway in Columbus. The YOGC follows the Muscogee County School District calendar and observes most, **but not all**, of the same holidays as they might affect rehearsals. Please check the YOGC rehearsal schedule for the correct information. YOGC will distribute rehearsal and performance dates for the upcoming season as early as possible, usually by the beginning of July.

Rehearsal times and venues: String Orchestra, 6:00-7:30 PM, Room 1715
Youth Orchestra, 7:30-9:30 PM, Room 1716

Percussionists: Percussionists are required to help load in and out at each concert. The percussion coach will coordinate this activity and so inform players where to meet to load in before the sound check. All percussionists are asked to remain after the concert for a few minutes to assist with loading out.

As the pops concert is presented away from the RiverCenter, percussion equipment, music stands, and other miscellaneous items must be transported by truck to and from the venue on the day of the concert. Volunteers will be needed to load, unload, and drive the truck as well as setting up and tearing down the stage.

Bad weather policy: In general, the YOGC will follow the CSU weather advisory/cancellation policy for rehearsals. In the event of tornado/severe thunderstorm occurrences or warnings, rehearsals will be canceled. Notification of cancellation will be posted on the web site, Facebook, and recorded on the YOGC voice mail. In any case parents should use their own discretion in the face of severe weather. Absences resulting from severe weather will be excused. Concerts canceled as a result of severe weather will be rescheduled at an appropriate time.

Summer String Camp

The Summer String Camp is a week-long session in June of every year which offers string players the opportunity to further develop their skills by working with a number of professional musicians/educators. The camp is open to all string players who have had a minimum of one year of school orchestra experience or private lessons. All camp activities are held at Columbus State University's Schwob School of Music with a final concert in the school's Legacy Hall. Participants will refine their skills in full ensemble rehearsals and chamber music coachings while also studying music theory, history, and composition. Excursions into different musical genres (like bluegrass music) are common.

No audition is required for admittance to the camp program, but the Music Director reserves the right to hold placement auditions in order to assure that each student is instructed according to his/her degree of accomplishment. The tuition fee for this camp is \$300.00 per student. Partial tuition remission is available, and all requests must be submitted by June 1 with rare exception by the committee. Tuition includes a meal plan for the child.

The Bradley-Turner Instrument Program

Courtesy of a generous contribution from the Bradley-Turner Foundation the YOGC has been able to purchase a number of high-quality stringed instruments. These instruments are loaned, at no cost, to deserving orchestra members for use during their tenure in the program. Student recipients are selected via a competitive essay contest which is organized and judged by the YOGC Board of Directors. For more information, please contact the Executive Director.

Miscellaneous Considerations

Safety

Due to the large number of students involved in our program, we request your help to ensure each young musician's safety. Please do not deliver your children to rehearsal or collect them afterward outside of the designated time limits. While we will not leave your child alone to wait for you, it is inconsiderate of our staff to expect them to wait with your child for extended periods of time. Whenever you find yourself waiting at a rehearsal or before or after a concert, please help to monitor both the students' behavior and the situations in which they find themselves. If you notice anything untoward, please contact a staff member immediately.

Orchestra Seating Assignments

Initial seating assignments in all of the ensembles will be determined by the entrance auditions. However, the Music Director may rotate some seating assignments or hold additional chair placement auditions during the season in order to provide the most well-rounded experience for each player.

Practice Tips

Maestro Shinichi Suzuki, the great Japanese violin pedagogue, when asked how often a student should practice, replied, "Only on the days you eat." We want you to improve as an instrumentalist and grow as a musician. The only way that will happen is through consistent, disciplined practice. Mr. Palmer offers this advice regarding practicing:

- Always practice in a quiet place, without distractions. Pay attention to the manner in which you physically address your instrument. String players, pay attention to your bow hold, draw the bow in a straight line, and be aware of your left arm and hand position.
- Use a music stand, and place the music at eye level.
- If your instrument allows, spend the majority of your practice time standing and with excellent posture. You will have more energy.
- Practice fundamentals first, then move on to your orchestra music. Work especially on those sections requested by the Conductor or chamber or sectional coach.
- Work slowly and carefully.
- End your practice session with music you are comfortable playing. Enjoy playing your instrument and making music.

Attendance at Community Arts Events

A large part of your musical and artistic training involves observing the work of other artists. We are fortunate to live in a community that offers countless such opportunities from the Columbus Symphony Orchestra to many free concerts by the students and faculty of the Schwob School of Music, to the Springer Opera House, and to the Columbus Museum, to name only a few. The arts are a vast web of interconnected human expression. Visit <http://calendarcolumbusga.com> for a complete listing of events.

Tickets to YOGC Concerts

YOGC strives to make its concerts as accessible as possible and considers the tuition cost when determining ticket prices for certain YOGC concerts. Ticket prices will be communicated in advance.

Appendix

Letter of Understanding and Commitment

We, the undersigned, have read, and do understand, accept, and agree to abide by the terms, rules, and policies as expressed in this handbook. We will fulfill our obligations as described herein in a timely manner. We will accept the authority and abide by any decisions made by Youth Orchestra of Greater Columbus staff, as outlined in the various sections of this document.

In return we expect that the orchestra will fulfill its promise to offer a superior music education experience to all of the young people enrolled in the program.

Student's Name (Printed)

Student's Signature

Parent's Name (Printed)

Parent's Signature

Please print this page, affix the required signatures, and give it to the Executive Director at the season-opening orientation meeting.