



NORWALK **YOUTH** SYMPHONY

**HANDBOOK**  
**FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS**  
**2023-2024**



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# ABOUT THE NORWALK YOUTH SYMPHONY

The purpose of the Norwalk Youth Symphony is to enrich the lives of young people within a musical community. We provide the finest possible training, practice and performance opportunities, enabling our students to learn, share and enjoy the power of music.

In partnership with parents, teachers and schools we:

- provide exposure to diverse orchestral styles under the guidance of musical professionals,
- identify and educate motivated students regardless of financial circumstance,
- foster a sense of achievement and self-esteem through a developmental approach, and
- promote self-discipline and teamwork through respect for artistic standards.

Founded in 1956, the NYS has expanded since that time to include over 250 musicians from more than 30 area towns each year. Its reputation has also grown. Many alumni have gone on to study professionally at music conservatories and colleges such as Juilliard, Eastman, Manhattan School of Music, Berklee College of Music, Hartt College of Music, Northwestern and the New England Conservatory. Graduates have also played in college orchestras at Yale, Harvard, Dartmouth, Wellesley, Ithaca, Brown, Princeton, University of California at Berkeley, Williams, MIT, Hamilton, Boston College, Columbia and others. One alumnus is a three-time Grammy Award winner. All NYS members gain an invaluable discipline and musical experience that instills a lifelong appreciation of music and the arts.

**STRUCTURE** - The Norwalk Youth Symphony is comprised of five ensembles representing four levels of youth orchestras. The five ensembles, each with its own highly qualified conductor, allow the individual to progress with young musicians of similar ability. NYS also offers a Brass Ensemble.

- **Prelude Orchestra:** An entry-level string orchestra that performs student works in order to develop skills in string technique, music theory, and ensemble performance.
- **Philharmonia Strings:** A string orchestra that provides a transition from Prelude Orchestra to the more difficult repertoire that is performed by the Concert Orchestra.
- **Philharmonia Orchestral Winds:** Young woodwind and brass players receive the special attention needed to develop their technique, sound, musicality, and orchestral ensemble playing. This ensemble performs orchestral arrangements and periodically performs with the Philharmonia Strings.
- **Concert Orchestra:** This full symphony orchestra provides experience in rehearsing and performing a wide range of shorter works from the Classical, Romantic, and Contemporary periods.
- **Principal Orchestra:** Our most advanced symphonic orchestra performs demanding orchestral classical, romantic, and 20th century repertoire such as full-length symphonies, symphonic poems, overtures, and concertos.

Membership and placement are by audition only. Each player, including a returning musician from the previous year, is auditioned every year by the conductors in late August and the beginning of September to ensure correct placement according to individual ability.

The Norwalk Youth Symphony is sponsored by the City of Norwalk.

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## CONDUCTORS

**Jonathan Yates** is the Music Director of the Norwalk Youth Symphony and the conductor of the Principal Orchestra. Jonathan has earned high praise as a conductor, solo pianist, and collaborative artist for his musicianship, intellect, and the remarkable variety of his musical endeavors. He made his professional orchestral conducting debut at 23, leading the National Symphony Orchestra in a Millennium Stages Concert. The following year he made his Carnegie Hall debut as a participant in the Isaac Stern Chamber Music Workshop. Jonathan also serves as Music Director of the Norwalk Symphony Orchestra, where he has been a driving force in reinvigorating the relationship between the symphony and its community.

He has collaborated as a pianist and conductor with many of the country's most respected musicians, including Midori, Kim Kashkashian, David Finckel, Charles Neidich, Ida Kavafian, Colin Carr, Gilbert Kalish, Paul Neubauer, Joseph Lin, and William Purvis; and the Avalon, Daedalus and Pacifica Quartets. He has been heard as a chamber musician at the 92nd Street Y, Miller Theater, Bargemusic and Merkin Hall, as well as at the Caramoor Festival and on the Ravinia Festival Rising Stars Series. As an ardent devotee of the music of our time, he has conducted new music concerts with the Argento Chamber Ensemble and the Knights, was the recipient of an ASCAP award for adventurous programming, and has given local and regional premieres of pre-eminent composers including Augusta Read Thomas, Huang Ruo, Zhou Long, Chester Biscardi, and Chen Yi.

Jonathan received his Graduate Diploma in conducting from the Juilliard School, where he studied with James DePreist and Otto-Werner Mueller, and was the holder of the Bruno Walter Memorial Scholarship. He received his Master of Music from State University of New York, where he worked with Gilbert Kalish, and his Bachelor of Arts from Harvard University, where he studied with Robert Levin. His past work includes serving as founding Music Director of Camerata Notturna, as Music Director of Music Mountain, and on the faculty of Sarah Lawrence College. He was recently named Director of Classical Series at 23Arts Windham Music and Jazz Fest. He descends from a family that has been on the forefront of the battles for the cultural and humanistic life of our country. His grandfather, U. S. Representative Sidney R. Yates, was the principal defender of the National Endowment for the Arts in his 48 years in Congress, and his father, the Honorable Stephen R. Yates, was the first judge in Illinois to approve same-sex adoption.

**STEVEN HUANG** has conducted orchestras and operas across the United States and throughout the world, including recurring guest conductor of the Ohio Valley Symphony, National Philharmonic of Moldova, and l'Orchestre Philharmonique de Ste. Trinité, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. At the age of twenty-one, he served as Music Director of the Bach Society Orchestra of Harvard University, where he received his undergraduate degree, as well as the Lowell House Opera, the oldest continuously running opera company in New England. From 2004-2020, he served on faculty as Director of Orchestral Activities at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. He is currently the Music Director of the New Westchester Symphony Orchestra.

Since 2000, Steven has visited Haiti numerous times to work with musicians as a conductor, pianist, cellist, and teacher. As faculty at L'Ecole de Musique Ste. Trinité, he has attended summer music camps in Leogâne, Port-au-Prince, Petionville, and Cange; in addition to guest conducting regular season concerts. He has also participated as faculty with L'Ecole de Musique Dessaix-Baptiste in Jacmel. As a faculty member at Ohio University, he has supported several Haitian musicians' sabbatical education in the United States.

Steven's conducting experience is worldwide. He has held the position of Music Director of the University of Chicago Chamber Orchestra, Fortismere Symphony of London, the Central Illinois Youth

Symphony, the Gilbert and Sullivan Players of Chicago, and the Bradley University Orchestra. He has guest conducted programs with the Boston Pops, Illinois Symphony Orchestra, Brasov Philharmonic, the New Symphony Orchestra of Bulgaria; the Attergau Kultursommer Orchestra in Austria, in conjunction with the Salzburg Festival; the Jeunesses Musicales Festival Orchestra, and Pitesti Philharmonic in Romania; and the “Regina Vioara” International Violin Festival Orchestra in Moldova.

Mr. Huang earned the Master of Music degree in Orchestral Conducting from the University of Michigan as a student of Kenneth Kiesler. He twice received the Herbert von Karajan Fellowship for Young Conductors for study at the Salzburg Festival, and the Fulbright Fellowship for study at the National University of Music in Bucharest, where he was the student of Dumitru Goia.

**JESSICA MCNAMARA** began her tenure with Norwalk Youth Symphony in 2007 as a sectional coach for violins and was appointed conductor of Philharmonia String Orchestra in 2009. She went to Providence College on a full scholarship and graduated Summa Cum Laude with a degree in Music Education. Jessica also holds a Masters Degree in Music Education from the Hartt School of Music.

Jessica taught middle school orchestra in the Westport public schools for 11 years and later went on to found the Ridgefield Suzuki School in Ridgefield, CT. Jessica and her colleagues at Ridgefield Suzuki School enjoy inspiring children as young as 3 years old to begin playing violin, viola, cello or piano and continue to make music an important part of their lives as they grow into adults. Jessica also conducts with the Fairfield County Summer String Orchestra and Band, a summer program she and her husband founded in 2009. Beginning with just one level and 50 students, the program has developed to a four-tiered organization for students in 3rd to 12th grades, with over 200 students participating.

**BARRY ZHOU** is a conductor and music educator proudly based in Connecticut. In addition to conducting the Philharmonia Winds, Barry is the Director of Bands at New Canaan HS. In his summers, he helps continue Connecticut’s long tradition of firehouse community bands by serving as Assistant Conductor for the Sound Beach Community Band based in Greenwich, CT.

Barry received his Master’s Degree in Music Education with a focus on Instrumental Conducting from the University of Hartford where he studied with Glen Adsit and Edward Cumming. He also received a Bachelors in Music Education from Western Connecticut State University where he studied trumpet with Rich Clymer and conducting with Dr. Fernando Jimenez. He has a wealth of experience attending conducting workshops throughout the years, including having attended the Conductor’s Institute at Bard College where he studied with reputable teachers such as Mark Gibson and Harold Farbermann. He previously taught for 8 years at East Elementary School, also in New Canaan, CT, and was the music director for the East School Singers. Barry also spent time working with many marching ensembles across the state including the Norwalk High School Bands, New Milford High School Bands, and the 7th Regiment Drum and Bugle Corps.

**AARON LOFARO** started playing the violin in the public school system in Briarcliff Manor, NY. He graduated from Roberts Wesleyan College (BM) and Western Connecticut State University (MME). Mr. Lofaro also successfully completed his long-term Suzuki training at the University of Hartford with Teri Einfeldt and Linda Fiore. Mr. Lofaro has been teaching orchestra and private violin lessons for over 20 years at the elementary, middle and high school levels. He is currently the orchestra director at Central Middle School in Greenwich, CT. Mr. Lofaro previously served as the String Orchestra conductor for Greater Bridgeport Youth Orchestras for 7 years, and violin and orchestra teacher at the Greenwich Suzuki Academy and the Suzuki Music School of Westport for 8 years. Additionally, he also has been director of the Senior Strings Orchestra with the town of Greenwich for the past 10 years. Mr. Lofaro continues to enjoy performing in a variety of settings and inspiring young musicians to achieve their highest level of playing

## **POLICIES FOR NYS MEMBERS**

### **PLACEMENT AND ACCEPTANCE**

The primary outcome of the auditions is assignment to one of the five Norwalk Youth Symphony orchestras. Acceptance and placement decisions are at the sole discretion of the conductors' considerable professional judgment and are final. Orchestra placements will be posted on the NYS web site during the week preceding the first rehearsal. Orchestra placement as well as seating assignments will be posted in the lobby at the first rehearsal.

### **SEATING ASSIGNMENT**

The audition is also important as an aid to the conductors in determining seating assignments. Seating in an orchestra is not determined by ranking. Rather, it is done in the best interests of the individual musicians and the orchestra as a whole. String players will NOT necessarily be seated according to ranked ability but by the conductor in such a way as to best benefit the orchestra. Changes in strings seating may be made throughout the year. This may involve rotation back and forth between the first and second violin sections.

### **SCHOOL PARTICIPATION**

NYS is committed to supporting and cooperating with school music programs. We are grateful for the support and referrals we receive from school music teachers; in turn, we believe that our members contribute back positively to their school music programs. Consequently, NYS does not operate as a substitute for school instrumental programs and NYS members are required to participate in their school instrumental programs, where they exist. Conflicts that prevent participation should be brought to the attention of the Executive Director as soon as possible.

### **PRIVATE STUDY**

It is expected that all members will pursue private study on their orchestral instruments. Limited scholarship assistance for private lessons is available.

### **INSURANCE:**

The Norwalk Youth Symphony's insurance policies do not cover instruments owned by individual members. Please check your own household coverage.

### **MUSIC:**

Each player is responsible for the care of his/her music and for bringing it (in its binder) to all rehearsals. Music is distributed at the beginning of each concert period. There is a \$5 fee to replace music after the second rehearsal for each concert.

### **REHEARSAL/CONCERT ETIQUETTE**

The use of cell phones and other electronic devices is not permitted during rehearsals or concerts. Anyone found using one will have their cell phone/electronic device confiscated until the end of rehearsal or concert. Consequences for habitual cell phone use, disruptive behavior, etc., may include being placed on probation, being seated at the back of a section, or other actions that may be appropriate.

### **NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

The Norwalk Youth Symphony admits students of any race and does not discriminate on the basis of race or sex in administering its educational programs, admission or placement policies, scholarships or other programs.

## TUITION AND FEES, 2023-2024 SEASON

*For this season tuition will be waived for Brass Players who successfully audition for NYS*

	Principal	Concert	Phil/Prelude
TUITION	\$800	\$750	\$700
4 SEASON TICKETS	\$180	\$180	\$180
SNACK FEE	\$30	\$30	\$30
MUSIC FEE	\$25	\$25	\$25
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1035</b>	<b>\$985</b>	<b>\$935</b>

Families with more than one member purchase only one set of season tickets.

**Chamber Ensembles** (20 coachings for season)  
NYS Musician \$500 Non NYS musician \$550

**Theory** (#classes tbc)  
TBD

### PAYMENT

NYS offers two payment options:

Option I: **Full payment at the first rehearsal.**

Option II: **Three equal payments** due September 15<sup>th</sup>, October 15<sup>th</sup>, November 15<sup>th</sup>.

Members who withdraw or become ineligible to participate in NYS will not receive a refund.

Please contact the office for scholarship applications and to discuss payment arrangements.  
**Scholarship applications are due September 12<sup>th</sup>.**

**CHECKS SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO NORWALK YOUTH SYMPHONY**  
**CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS MAY BE MADE WITH MASTERCARD, VISA or DISCOVER**

# **ATTENDANCE**

## **REHEARSAL ATTENDANCE**

When joining the program, we ask that students make a commitment to the program and its rehearsal schedule and avoid scheduling other activities during the scheduled orchestra rehearsals and performances. Attending rehearsals strengthens the group as an ensemble and enhances the student's experience. Although we expect students to commit to attending every rehearsal, we know that there are cases such as religious commitments when conflicts are unavoidable. Students are allowed a maximum of two (2) absences during each concert rehearsal period. Requests for exceptions should be raised in advance to the Executive Director, who may consult with the Executive Committee if needed. Please note that there are mandatory rehearsals for each concert period. These dates are noted in the rehearsal schedule. Absences at mandatory rehearsals may result in the musician not performing in the concert or dismissal from the program.

Rehearsals start promptly at the time indicated on the schedule. Musicians should be fully warmed up and in their seats with their instruments tuned prior to the start of rehearsal. Excessive tardiness, at the discretion of the conductor, may affect seating placement or removal from the orchestra.

## **CONCERT ATTENDANCE**

Concert attendance is mandatory. Absence from a concert may result in dismissal from the Orchestra for the season. Extraordinary circumstances will be reviewed by the Executive Director and the Executive Committee. Absence from the May concert may result in the inability to participate in the following season, subject to review by the Executive Director and the Executive Committee.

## **COMMUNICATION/ABSENCES**

Due to the large number of musicians in the Orchestra, we ask that all communications regarding attendance be reported on our website using the "Report an Absence" button. Please do not phone or text your absence information, as we need to have a record of the absence.

## **SEVERE WEATHER PROCEDURE:**

If bad weather causes a rehearsal cancellation, a message will be posted on our web site and Facebook page. A message will be left on the office phone and cell. Please remember that NYS members come from over two dozen different communities, some of which have more severe weather problems than others. If a rehearsal is not cancelled and you have concerns about your child's safety in traveling to Norwalk, we urge you to use your best judgment. Such absences will not count as one of the two allowed absences of the concert period. Please submit an absence online if you decide not to send your child.

## CONCERT BEHAVIOR

It is the tradition at NYS concerts that those members who are not performing sit in the audience while their peers play. This gives them a chance to hear the other orchestras and to get a sense of the continuity that the organization provides through its graded orchestra system. **As a courtesy to their fellow performers, all musicians are expected to remain until the final group on the program has finished its performance.**

There is a standard of behavior expected of those in the audience that is as follows:

- Musicians are expected to sit quietly in their seats.
- There is to be absolutely no talking during a performance.
- No one is to leave the auditorium except during breaks between orchestras and then only singly or in the company of **one** other musician.
- The same courteous attention should be paid to those on the stage as one would expect to receive when it is his or her turn to play.
- It goes without saying that horseplay and other such inappropriate behavior is not acceptable.
- Musicians' cell phones and other electronic devices are not to be brought into the auditorium.
- Parents, please discuss this important matter with your child before the concert. We all want the concerts to be special, so it would really be unfortunate if a few members marred the impression that our fine performances create for our audiences.



# NYS CONCERT DRESS

## WHY WE HAVE A DRESS CODE FOR PERFORMANCES

A dress code enables the orchestra to match visually the artistic unity and professionalism that it strives to convey musically in performance. If you have any questions about an article of clothing or need help in acquiring an item, please contact the Executive Director Sara. Review your performance dress well in advance so you don't find yourself unprepared the day of the performance.

### All Orchestras

Required: Black shoes and black socks/stockings

No sneakers, sandals, jeans, leggings or tight fitting pants.

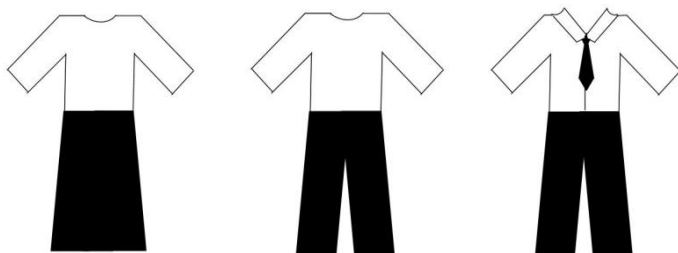
No bare arms, midriiffs, legs or feet.

### Prelude & Philharmonia Orchestras

Long sleeved solid white shirt/top

Plain black slacks/full black skirt

Long conservative dark tie (Boys)



### Concert and Principal Orchestras

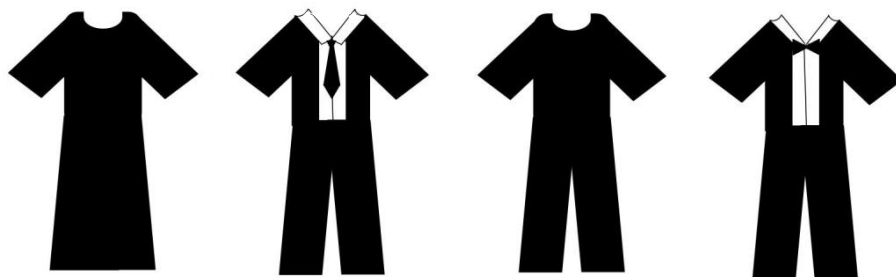
Long solid black dress, ankle length skirt or black dress pants (Girls)

Long sleeved solid black top (Girls)

Black suit and white shirt (Boys)

Long solid dark tie (Concert Boys)

Black bow tie (Principal Boys)



# ENRICHMENT

## SMALL ENSEMBLES

NYS offers small ensembles to strings and woodwind players. Ensembles are in the form of trios, quartets and quintets. Coachings are held at City Hall on Sundays before or after the student's orchestra rehearsal. New in 2023 NYS will offer small ensembles in coordination with Westport Suzuki. Musicians who are not placed in a NYS Sunday group will have the opportunity to have coachings held at the Westport Suzuki Studio during the week.

## CONCERTO COMPETITION

NYS sponsors a Concerto Competition each season for members of the Principal Orchestra. All who wish to do so may audition in December for this event. **MUSIC TO BE PERFORMED AT THE COMPETITION MUST BE SUBMITTED TO THE PRINCIPAL ORCHESTRA CONDUCTOR NO LATER THAN THE FIRST REHEARSAL IN NOVEMBER.** This insures that (a) the work being prepared is playable by the orchestra and (b) the music will not have to be rented. The winner will play a movement of a concerto with the orchestra at the Winter concert. Musician may only win the competition one time.

## SECTIONAL REHEARSALS

Professional musicians and teachers are brought to rehearsals a minimum of two times during each concert period to work specifically with different sections of all five orchestras. Such sessions are invaluable in helping to prepare each member of the NYS for performance at concerts and in producing a unified sound within sections. The dates of these sectionals are listed in the NYS 2023-2024 schedule.

## TRAVEL ABROAD

In the summer of 2008 NYS embarked on its first performance trip overseas. Members of the Concert and Principal Orchestras traveled to Prague, Budapest, Vienna and Salzburg. Since 2008 NYS has traveled biannually. Past tours include touring the Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria, Spain, Italy, Germany, Portugal/Spain and return to Italy in 2022. In June of 2024 we will travel and perform in Prague, Vienna & Salzburg.

## MASTER CLASSES

From time to time we hold master classes, where participants in our program may perform in public for a guest instructor, who then coaches the students. Both audience members and performers can learn a great deal from these "open lessons."

## ADDITIONAL PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES

In order to enhance the performing experience for its musicians, the Norwalk Youth Symphony arranges for performances in such places as Carnegie Hall and Tanglewood. Concert Orchestra performs with INTEMPO and Principal Orchestra performs with the Norwalk Symphony each spring. These are considered to be an integral part of the musical education the NYS offers and participation is mandatory.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community Service concerts enhance the performance experience for NYS musicians, while thanking the community for the support it (and its musicians) receive. Therefore, there are occasions when the NYS orchestras and chamber music participants perform benefit concerts in the area. These are also mandatory activities.

## YOUTH COMMITTEE

The Youth Committee is the representative voice of all orchestras of the NYS. Its purpose is to listen to the concerns and suggestions of orchestra members and to help make participation in the NYS a more rewarding experience. The committee meets once a month with a parent advisor who reports

back to the Board of Directors as the Committee's messenger. Thus an opportunity for open communication between the orchestras and the Board is provided, and the Board receives information that helps it to run the NYS in a way that will ensure a positive musical experience for all members.

**PARENT/GUARDIAN VOLUNTEER ENSEMBLE:**

The most valuable contribution parents can make is to support their student's obligation to attend all rehearsals and to encourage them to prepare the music thoroughly. However, we also need parent assistance for many other things. Please volunteer your time and talent at concerts, special events, and weekly rehearsals. In addition, each family is expected to assist once with the rehearsal snack that is served to the musicians at every week-end rehearsal. NEW \*NYS will utilize CivicChamps for volunteer registration and assignments.

Norwalk Youth Symphony  
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## YOUTH COMMITTEE PARTICIPATION FORM

All are encouraged to participate in the Youth Committee. If you are interested in participating, please fill out the attached form and return at the first rehearsal.

I am interested in being a representative from my orchestra to the Youth Committee.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Orchestra \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Instrument \_\_\_\_\_

I have served on the Youth Committee for \_\_\_\_\_ years.

This will be my first year on the Youth Committee