

60  
YEARS



NORWALK **YOUTH** SYMPHONY

**HANDBOOK**  
**FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS**  
**2015-16**



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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 six ensembles representing five levels of youth orchestras. The six ensembles, each with its own highly qualified conductor, allow the individual to progress with young musicians of similar ability.

- **Junior Strings:** Our newest ensemble Jr Strings is designed for students to develop their playing, listening, ensemble, and leadership skills.
- **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** was appointed the conductor of the Norwalk Youth Symphony **Principal Orchestra** in 2010 and **music director** in 2011. 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. He has also 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. He has performed as a concerto soloist with orchestras in North America, Europe and Asia, and has given solo recitals for the La Jolla Music Society, at the National Museum of American History (on fortepiano), and on the University of Chicago Concert Series. He served as Apprentice Conductor of the Chicago Youth Symphony, and for two years as Music Director of the Harvard University Bach Society Orchestra. As a past and founding member of the Amelia Piano Trio, he was presented by Isaac Stern in Weill Recital Hall and at Hill Auditorium at the University of Michigan, and was a finalist for the Walter F. Naumburg Chamber Music Prize.

Jonathan serves as the founding Music Director of Camerata Notturna, New York City's premiere community chamber orchestra. In that capacity, he has collaborated with some of the country's most respected musicians, including Kim Kashkashian, Colin Carr, Gilbert Kalish and William Purvis; given local and regional premieres of preeminent composers including Augusta Read Thomas, Huang Ruo, Chen Yi and Dan Coleman; and has been featured prominently in *Strings Magazine*. An ardent devotee of the music of our time, he gave ten premieres in his first three seasons with Camerata Notturna, has conducted new music concerts with the Argento Chamber Ensemble and the Knights, and was the recipient of an ASCAP award for adventurous programming. Highlights of his ample operatic experience have included conducting *Orfeo ed Euridice* and *Paride ed Elena* of Gluck at the California Music Festival and leading the world premiere of Michael Webster's opera *Hell* at Performance Space 122.

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.

**RUSSELL GER**, newly appointed conductor of Concert Orchestra. Russell is a young Australian conductor based in New York. His repertoire spans orchestral, operatic, and choral music, which he has conducted across North America and his home country.

Mr. Ger was the 2014 recipient of the prestigious Brian Stacey Memorial Trust Award for Emerging Australian Conductors. This is one of the highest accolades a young conductor can receive. It resulted in his candidacy for the position of Assistant Conductor with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra as well as to an invitation to conduct the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in a special showcase later this year.

In 2013, Mr. Ger was selected as one of four Finalists from around the world for the prestigious *2nd International Chicago Symphony Orchestra Sir Georg Solti Conducting Apprenticeship*. The audition took place before a panel of experts headed by the great mezzo-soprano Marilyn Horne, and Chicago Symphony music director Riccardo Muti.

Mr. Ger has toured North America with renowned violinist Itzhak Perlman, promoting a recording for Sony of Jewish art-music made in 2012. Performances took place at the Hollywood Bowl with members of the Los Angeles Philharmonic before an audience of 10,000, and at the Barclays Center arena in New York for an audience of 6,000. The tour also drew full-houses at the Boca Raton Arts Festival, Boston Celebrity Series at Symphony Hall, Ravinia Festival in Chicago, Long Island, and Toronto. A PBS Special went to air and was nationally televised in late 2014.

One of the highlights of Mr. Ger's early career came in 2003 when he conducted the Finale from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at the Sydney Opera House. On this occasion, he led a massed community chorus along with Sydney Symphony and Australian Opera-Ballet Orchestra members. The next year he repeated the performance at the Sydney Convention Center for an audience exceeding 3,000.

Mr. Ger was recently married to a wonderful Australian woman whom he met in NYC, where they both reside.

**JESSICA MCNAMARA** was named conductor of the Philharmonia Strings Orchestra in 2009. Jessica attended Providence College on a full scholarship and double majored in music and psychology. She graduated Summa Cum Laude from Providence College with a degree in Music Education. Since graduating from college she has been teaching in the Westport School system. Jessica is currently completing a master's degree in music education with a concentration in conducting at the Hartt School, University of Hartford. During the summer of 2009 she co-founded the Ridgefield Summer String Orchestra, a community orchestra for children and adults that meets once a week throughout the summer. Jessica regularly plays violin with the American Chamber Orchestra and is an active member in a string quartet

**MARY GARDNER** was appointed conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestral Winds this season. Mary received her Bachelor's degree in music education and performance from Ithaca College, where she studied percussion with Gordon Stout and Conrad Alexander, and conducting with Mark Fonder and Steve Peterson. In 2010, she completed her Master's degree in percussion performance under the direction of Haruka Fujii at the University of Connecticut. Mary has also studied at the Royal College of Music and the Guildhall School in London, and the University of Limerick in Ireland.

As a performer, Mary has received acclaim for her fluency in a wide variety of styles from contemporary music to traditional Irish to Brazilian folk tunes. As an advocate of new music, Mary has premiered works by composers including Gabriela Lena Frank, Dana Wilson, Nathan Currier, Paul Fowler and David Dzubay. She has performed with several orchestras throughout the area including New Haven Symphony and the Hartford Pops. Mary has appeared on stage at such notable venues as Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, the Goodspeed Opera House and NYU's Skirball Center for the Arts. She toured Ireland with Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin in 2003 and with Pat Kane in 2010. Her passion for diverse genres of music has put her on stage with the West Point Brass and Emmy Award winners Lillias White and Sarah Jessica Parker.

In addition to her career as a performing artist, Mary teaches beginning band and general music in Westport, Connecticut, and is the Education Development Coordinator for Swan Percussion.

**SUSAN JIMENEZ** was appointed the conductor of the **Prelude Orchestra** in 2009 and of the **Jr. Strings** in 2013. She is presently teaching elementary strings in the Fairfield Public School system. She has served as a conductor with the Waterbury Youth Symphony from 1996 to 2006, and in 2003, founded the organization's summer music program.

Mrs. Jimenez grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin where she attended a High School that specialized in visual and performing arts. From there she went on to obtain her Bachelor's Degree in cello performance from the Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati. In 1994 she received an Artist Diploma in Cello Performance from the Hartt School, University of Hartford, and in 1996, received her Master's Degree, also in Cello Performance, from Queens College, City University of New York. In 1998, she completed the Alternate Route to Certification and has been teaching in the public schools ever since. She has completed a long term Suzuki Cello training program at the School for Strings in Manhattan.

As a performer, she has played in orchestras throughout Connecticut, New York, Massachusetts, Ohio, Indiana, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. She was the former principal cellist of the Norwalk Symphony. Currently she is a member of the Greater Bridgeport Symphony, and the Waterbury Symphony.

# **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 members are expected to participate and remain in good standing in their school's instrumental programs, where they exist. Conflicts that prevent participation should be brought to the attention of the Executive Director as soon as possible. Good standing is determined by the school program. Those not participating will be asked to discuss the matter with the NYS Board's Executive Committee.

## **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.

## TUITION AND FEES, 2015-16 SEASON

	ORCHESTRA PROGRAM			
	Principal	Concert	Philharmonia Prelude	Junior Strings
TUITION	\$735	\$675	\$600	\$450
4 SEASON TICKETS	\$150	\$150	\$150	N/A
SNACK FEE	\$25	\$25	\$25	\$25
MUSIC FEE	\$25	\$25	\$25	\$25
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$935</b>	<b>\$875</b>	<b>\$800</b>	<b>\$500</b>

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

### **PAYMENT**

NYS offers two payment options:

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

Option II: **Three equal payments** due September 20th, October 15<sup>th</sup>, November 16<sup>th</sup>. This option includes a \$35 processing fee.

All tuition must be paid by November 16<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 at the first rehearsal.**

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

*\*There will be a convenience fee of 2% added to each credit card payment.\**

# **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 conflicts that are unavoidable. Students are allowed a maximum of two (2) absences during each concert rehearsal period. 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. Extraordinary circumstances will be reviewed by the Executive Committee.

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 or via email directed to the Executive Director. 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 phone and this information will be sent to Connecticut and Westchester News 12. 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 & DRESS

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.

### CONCERT DRESS

Correct concert dress makes our performances more professional and keeps the audience's focus on the music, not on the players. The dress code will therefore be strictly enforced. If you need assistance in finding concert dress items, please call the office. **A musician who arrives at a concert dressed in a manner which does not conform to this dress code may be denied participation in the concert or be seated in the back of his/her section.**

### PRELUDE AND PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRAS

#### GIRLS:

- long solid black skirt (ankle-length)
- **long-sleeved** solid white top
- black shoes – no sandals
- black stockings
- no bare arms, midriffs, legs or feet
- **Cellists, bassists, harpists:** Long solid black full skirt or long solid black loose fitting DRESS SLACKS. No jeans, tight fitting, hip-hugger pants will be allowed. There will be no exceptions to this rule.

#### BOYS:

- plain, black slacks
- white long-sleeved shirt
- long, conservative dark tie
- black shoes
- black socks
- no sneakers

## CONCERT AND PRINCIPAL ORCHESTRAS

### GIRLS:

- long solid black dress or skirt (**ankle-length**)
- **long-sleeved** solid black top
- black shoes – no sandals
- black stockings
- no bare arms, midriffs, legs or feet
- **Cellists, bassists, harpists:** Long solid black full skirt or long solid black loose fitting DRESS SLACKS. No jeans, tight fitting, or hip-hugger pants will be allowed. There will be no exceptions to this rule

### BOYS:

- black suit preferred
- white shirt
- black shoes
- black socks
- no sneakers
- boys in Principal Orchestra wear black bow ties
- boys in Concert Orchestra wear conservative, long ties

# ENRICHMENT

## SMALL ENSEMBLES

Beyond its orchestra program, the Norwalk Youth Symphony also encourages interested musicians to perform chamber music. This type of performance gives students the opportunity to give voice to their individual artistic expression while at the same time working in a cooperative group environment. Chamber Music Central coordinates the small ensemble program. Sunday rehearsals at City Hall will be available. Please visit CMC's website, [chambermusiccentral.org](http://chambermusiccentral.org), to register for a Small Ensemble.

## CONCERTO COMPETITION

The NYS sponsors a Concerto Competition every year for members of the Principal Orchestra. All who wish to do so may audition in January 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 May concert.

## 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 2015-16 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 Spain, Italy and Germany. Plans for the 2016 tour include performances in Prague, Vienna and 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, Tanglewood, Music in the Parks, The Norwalk Maritime Aquarium and the Norwalk Public Library. 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 four 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 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 by joining our PARENT ENSEMBLE. A sign-up form is enclosed in this folder. In addition, each family is expected to assist once with the afternoon snack that is served to the musicians at every major rehearsal. Parents must sign up for snack duty at the first rehearsal of the season. Parents are also expected to volunteer at one concert each year.

Norwalk Youth Symphony  
Sara Watkins Executive Director  
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Norwalk, CT 06851  
Telephone: 203-866-4100 Fax: 203-866-0012  
Cell phone (used during rehearsals and concerts only): 203-984-2658  
Web page: [www.norwalkyouthsymphony.org](http://www.norwalkyouthsymphony.org)

## 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