

The Whole Note

Newsletter of
The Norwalk Youth Symphony
November, 2000



Newsletter Staff

Carolyn Phillips Editor
Computing Concepts Graphics & Layout

From The Chairman

Last night, we “invited” two of our children to attend an orchestral concert with us. They were not pleased to be spending their Saturday night in this way. It was not one of those peak parenthood moments. “Why do we have to go?” “Because we think it’s important for you to hear ‘this’ kind of music too. No, we are not saying it’s ‘better’ than your music. You just need to hear it, that’s all.” It’s the old ‘spinach’ reason (“It’s good for you”) and it seldom sells well. Needless to say, I have found the pathway between our children and classical music to be slippery – and in need of footholds for us all.

Several weeks ago, I had the opportunity to sit in briefly while Jody Kruskal was leading a retreat for the Concert Orchestra. What struck me then was the very quality I caught when I watched our first NYS student sit down with Jim Andrews’ Chamber Orchestra nearly six years ago – and that is the sense of playfulness that pervaded. Jody had the students sawing away on squeaky, styrofoam violins and blowing unbearably high, piercing notes through tiny straw kazoos. The faces around the room were intent and full of fun. The children were being very loud and silly and having a great time – and they were getting their spinach. They were learning about improvisation, musical themes and composition – difficult concepts, but from the hands and words of a hard-working teacher they were delicious.

This quality of nourishing hard work goes on each and every week at the NYS rehearsals. Those of you who have sat in on a rehearsal know how hard the conductors work to translate concepts of sound. Young musicians require training and practice and explanations. It takes structure and commitment. And, in the end, they

require an audience. Maybe that’s the explanation I was groping for last night. Our family was part of closing the loop for those adult musicians, honoring their work and receiving something so rich in exchange.

You are all part of closing the loop for our young musicians. As we come to our first concert of the year, please bear in mind that what you’ll hear is the product of months of solid work on the part of the conductors, students, teachers and legions of volunteers. Honor their work with your presence and take delight in their music. Most of all, please participate in the process in any way you can. Encourage and cajole, coax and volunteer, and make large or small financial contributions. Surprising connections and whole cultures are woven for our children in this way.

You may be interested to know that the very same reluctant concert attendee said to his father today, “Hey, Dad, you know in school I think we’re playing the same piece by that Mahler guy that we heard last night.” Sometimes, it’s a long process. Bravo for spinach and Mahler guys and footholds, wherever we find them.

— Nancy Griffin
Chairman of the Board of Directors

I believe that when our orchestra is playing in absolute harmony I experience for some moments at a time...wonderment...fascination...I am drawn to such intense contemplation of the sound - seeming as one sound but in reality composed of all our parts - that I am taken to some other part of myself, wherein I am no longer this habitual semblance of myself that walks about and eats and sleeps and is idle but *myself entirely*.

—Rose Tremain in *Music and Silence*

Demographics

The Norwalk Youth Symphony auditioned nearly 300 young musicians this fall over the course of seven days. Of these, 32 were not offered a seat and 20 decided not to participate in the program for various reasons. Thus, at present the Principal Orchestra has 83 players, the Concert Orchestra 79, the Corelli Chamber Orchestra 42 and the Vivaldi Chamber Orchestra 41, which makes a total of 245 members for this season. These young people come from 30 local towns and communities including those nearby such as Westport, Wilton, New Canaan, Fairfield and Darien and those much further away, including Warren, New Milford, Danbury and New Preston.

Sectional Coaches

Professional musicians coach all sections of the NYS orchestras once a month during rehearsal time. This year, the strings are being assisted by members of the New Haven Symphony Orchestra, including Stephan Tieszan (violin I), Millie Piekos (violin II), Marvin Warshaw (viola), and Melissa Westgate (cello).

The NHSO has a very active education program. This year, it is beginning a yearlong partnership with schools in the Naugatuck Valley, through which it will send musicians for twelve coaching sessions to Seymour and Derby High Schools and present ensemble programs at several middle and elementary schools in this district. The NYS chamber orchestras also plan to present programs this year these same towns at schools that have no strings programs.

The brass coach is Tara Simoncic, who is also the NYS's substitute conductor and one of our auditioners. Olav van Hezewijk, whose biography appeared in the July 2000 edition of the *Whole Note*, works with the winds, and Joseph Russo, a local bass teacher from Weston, coaches the basses.

From the Executive Director

I am always impressed when I answer the office telephone to find a musician instead of a parent at the other end telling me that she will be unable to attend a practice. Somehow, this assumption of responsibility tells me that this child is moving forward in life in a positive manner. It has always been my yardstick of any Norwalk Youth Symphony program to ask whether it is in the best interests of the child. Developing a calendar, arriving at rehearsal on time, keeping track of music and caring for an instrument provide a great sense of accomplishment for a young person, and learning how to ask for assistance from adults or peers can be a positive thing. Children who are allowed to experience the NYS program on their own also seem to develop a self-assurance and a maturity that I admire. Having three children of my own, I remember how hard it was to let them participate in activities independently, but in retrospect I'm glad I did this. All of them are, as a result, very good at sizing up a new situation, figuring out what needs to be done, and mustering the tools and organization to succeed.

— Carolyn Phillips

Retreats

The Concert and Chamber Orchestras were each treated in October to a wonderful day of music activities led by Jody Kruskal of the Public Works Orchestra. Mr. Kruskal and his trusty band first performed an original composition on instruments they had made themselves out of everyday material and then talked about acoustics, sound and these instruments. Following this, the musicians made their own creations out of soda bottles, tin cans, drinking straws, styrofoam boxes and other such materials. After a box lunch, the orchestras were broken into sections, which composed their own versions of *The Four Seasons*. These masterpieces were later performed for the entire group's appreciation.

The purpose of these events is not only to present new information about music but also to allow orchestra members to become better acquainted with one another and with their conductor. Both goals were admirably met.

Jody Kruskal and members of the Chamber Orchestra at the recent retreat.



Scholarships

The Norwalk Youth Symphony is pleased to announce that this season it has granted over \$19,000 in scholarship assistance for regular tuition, small ensembles tuition, ticket obligations and music lessons to 25 young musicians in our program. These grants are made possible by individual donations and by grants from the Westport/Weston United Way, which provides substantial assistance for youngsters living in those towns, by the Westport Young Woman's League, which has supported our program generously for many years, by the Norwalk Youth Symphony's own Memorial Scholarship Fund and by the Fairfield County Foundation. This last is a growing community foundation with assets of more than \$37 million in over 155 different donor funds established by individuals, organizations, families and corporations to serve Fairfield County now and in the future. Through the Foundation, donors support programs in the arts, children and youth, community and economic development, the environment, and health and human services. The Foundation was established in 1992 as a result of the merger of five smaller community foundations - Danbury, Greenwich, Stamford, Five Town, and the Fairfield County Cooperative Foundation, part of the New York Community Trust. The Five Town Community Fund is specifically dedicated to serving Darien, Norwalk, Westport, Weston and Wilton.

In the past year, according to Fairfield County Foundation Chair Ann S. Mandel, the Fairfield County Foundation awarded grants to Fairfield County nonprofit organizations totaling over \$2 million and has provided over \$8.5 million in loans to nonprofit organizations since 1992 through the Fairfield County Nonprofit Loan Fund.

Norwalk Youth Symphony

Fall Concert

November 18, 2000 - 8:00 PM

Norwalk Concert Hall, 125 East Avenue, Norwalk, CT

This program is dedicated to the teachers of Norwalk Youth Symphony students.

PRINCIPAL ORCHESTRA - ECKART PREU, CONDUCTOR

Isle of the Dead, Op. 29 - Rachmaninoff

Capriccio Espagnol, Op. 34 - Rimsky-Korsakoff

Alborado

Variazioni

Alborado

Scena e Canto Gitano

Fandango Asturiano

CONCERT ORCHESTRA - RICHARD BROOKS, CONDUCTOR

Symphony No. 3 - Mahler, arr. Leidig

Finale

Variations on a Theme of Haydn - Brahms, arr. Leidig

Pictures at an Exhibition - Moussorgsky, arr. Walter

Promenade

Great Gate of Kiev

CORELLI CHAMBER ORCHESTRA - JAMES ANDREWS, CONDUCTOR

Chorus of the Huntsmen - von Weber, arr. Dackow

VIVALDI CHAMBER ORCHESTRA - JAMES ANDREWS, CONDUCTOR

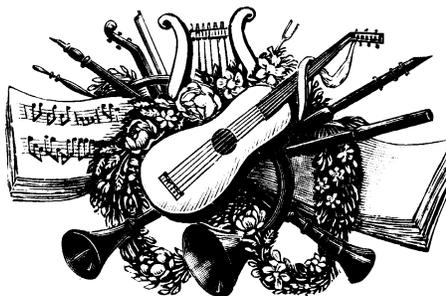
Fox in the Chicken House - Siennicki

COMBINED CHAMBER ORCHESTRAS

March of the Bowmen - Caponegro

Rosin Eating Zombies from Outer Space - Meyer

Prior to this concert, a reception will be held for leaders of the Norwalk community. Those attending will be able to meet members of the Board of Directors, the conductors and selected musicians. They will learn more about the Norwalk Youth Symphony program, and discuss ways in which the Youth Symphony and the City can work together.



"What brings audiences back to the halls is if they see that something real and exciting is happening on the stage...The goal is never to engage the audience; the goal is to engage the musicians. When things happen on stage, the audience will immediately follow."

—Paavo Jarvi, conductor

Conductor's Corner

I like listening to auditions. It's an interesting musical experience. How often have I auditioned myself – and how often will I be in this situation again? 100 times? More? It's such an important subject that it's worth sharing some thoughts.

Honestly, I dislike to audition – to put it in a nice way. To show in a couple of minutes your musicianship without the possibility of repeating, of trying again, is extremely difficult, and puts an enormous pressure on a serious musician. To play an audition well is very hard – but so is judging it. There are entire courses, master classes, even weekend camps, dedicated to this subject: how do I play a good audition?

Whenever I prepare for an audition, the most important thing is the obvious - PRACTICE. And practice doesn't mean 30 minutes a day; it means 3, 6, 9 hours a day. It means to live, eat, and sleep with the music. You go to school with it, go shopping with it, sit with it in the car, on the bus. Music becomes a very close, attached, and sometimes nasty companion that you can't get rid of. You struggle with it. You don't have time for your friends anymore. After several days or weeks of intense practice, you may start dreaming about your piece because your brain is working even at night, because the music is taking over your mind. Your body is absorbing the music. STOP! That's the time to stop, to take a day off - or two. Let it sink in. Don't push it too much. Then go back to practicing, and you'll feel that the nasty companion has become a friend, a toy that you can play with, that you can form and alter, that you can paint in your colors. Now that you know the notes and the bowings and how to identify and master the technical difficulties, the fun part starts. What to do with the music?

And THAT is the part I am interested in when I listen to auditions. WHAT do you do with those notes, phrases and dynamic markings? What do you want to tell me about the music, YOUR music? It is sad or happy? Is it a story with a

development or a description of a scene? What scene?

That is what keeps me awake at auditions! I really don't want to know that you didn't have that much time for preparation or that you are nervous; one never has enough time to prepare, and everyone is nervous. But you can always recognize a musician, anxious or not. You can always hear if that person wants to make music, has imagination, has a feeling for phrasing...

What I am looking for in an audition is...music and a musician. It's as simple (and as difficult) as that.

—Eckart Preu

I feel compelled to respond to the recent rumblings within the Concert Orchestra that my programming for the initial concert this season is “not challenging enough.” I realize that this reflects the view of a small minority of the members of the orchestra, but nonetheless I believe it reveals a misconception that may be more common amongst our young musicians than one might think.

I'm reminded of the words of a colleague of mine: “There is no simple music.” I echoed these sentiments in my brief remarks to the parents at their first meeting of the year. I believe that too often young people don't really delve deeply into the music, but rather approach it on a naïve, superficial, solely technical level. If the notes aren't pushing their techniques to the limit, they don't feel challenged. But consider this: would an actor complain about not being challenged if the vocabulary of his lines wasn't difficult to comprehend?

Accomplished musicians understand that the most difficult music is often that which seems “simple.” Amateur orchestras frequently program works by Mozart because they don't press techniques to the limit. And yet, in a newspaper interview some time ago, a professional conductor of a regional orchestra was quoted as saying, “I won't attempt Mozart on only three rehearsals.” Slow movements, those *Andantes* and *Adagios* that don't have any fast notes, look easy on the

surface. And yet, the MUSIC that must be injected into those notes by a performer to communicate the artistic content can be daunting. As with the actor, it isn't just the words that make a play effective, but the way they in which they are recited!

While some players returned to the Concert Orchestra this season, a few for the third or even fourth year, many of our string players moved up from the Chamber Orchestra, and so I have to consider the *entire* group when programming. My goal for this first performance is to focus less on mere note execution and more on achieving a polished ensemble, a unified interpretation, and concentrating on dynamic contrast and melodic phrasing. Too often, these all-important elements of music are forsaken when just getting the notes out with some degree of accuracy is the primary objective.

Watch great performers and observe the effortless way in which they play! They are not preoccupied with just “playing the part.” They have mastered the technical execution of the music and are pouring their expressive souls into producing an interpretation that touches an audience. The notes themselves can't do that.

I believe I have quoted Nadia Boulanger in this column before. Her statement to an aspiring concert pianist was that “first of all you must have an impeccable technique.” “But,” she continued, “once you possess an impeccable technique, you have *nothing*.” The implication is clear. The technique is the basic tool; the *art* of music comes from getting past the technical requirements of a piece and delving into the esoteric aesthetic levels that exist beyond the notes.

Young people are impetuous by nature, and much of art comes from living and experiencing, which only time can accrue. However, we must *try* to benefit from the wisdom of the ages, whether it is a parent's advice or a conductor's directive. Our musicians must strive to understand the importance of playing together,

continued

Conductor's Corner continued

of producing a coherent, unified interpretation that clearly expresses what we understand the composer to be saying.

I'm reminded of an incident during the auditions. A young violinist came in and attempted to play a very difficult piece that neither Eckart nor I were familiar with. As the student struggled just to hit the notes, compromising rhythm and tempo and doing nothing that even suggested a musical phrase, Eckart looked at me in bewilderment and shrugged. "I don't *understand* this," he said. I was struck by the profound implication of those words. *Every* performer must communicate an *understanding* of

the music, so that even an initial listening communicates *something*. Slopping through a piece with athletic determination *isn't* making music!

Our tackling the music of Brahms, Mahler, and Moussorgsky in adapted arrangements may seem easy to some, but I would suggest that those people are missing something very important in the music and should try to look deeper. Look at the dynamics under the notes. Concentrate on the phrases that are suggested in the music and that we've discussed in rehearsals. Listen to *everything*, and try to understand how your part integrates with the whole, how your piece of the puzzle fits. Strive for the most polished performance you've ever given!

—Richard Brooks

Welcome new faces and welcome back familiar faces. Both Chamber Orchestras are off to a wonderful start. It is always exciting for me to begin a new season, and I must say that it feels good to be back teaching and building the foundation for young musicians. Good habits must start at an early stage in one's development, and I encourage everyone to keep practicing. A special "hello" and "thank you" to my friends from the New Haven Symphony who are coaching all of the string sections of the NYS orchestras. Everyone keep up the good work and I will do my best to work hard also!

P.S. I do miss sleeping in on Saturday mornings!

—Jim Andrews

Book Review:

THE REAL MEANING OF "HANDS-ON" EDUCATION

(Frank R. Wilson is a neurologist and the medical director of the Peter F. Ostwald Health Program for Performing Artists at the University of California School of Medicine, San Francisco.)

Mr. Wilson in his book, "*Hand: How Its Use Shapes the Brain, Language and Human Culture*," makes the point that our primal ancestors, in their development from tree-dwelling beings to hominids, staked everything on the skilled use of the arm and the hand. Thus, "it was the biomechanics of the modern hand that set the stage for the creation of the neurological machinery needed to support a host of behaviors centered on skilled use of the hand. If the hand did not build the brain, it almost certainly provided the structural template around which an ancient brain built both a new system for hand control and a new bodily domain of experience, cognition and imaginative life."

This theory produces another, postulating that curious, exploratory, improvisational interaction of the hand with objects in the real world gives rise to what we call "ideas." As one man said, "as you practice more and more, you get the little ideas that just

come with the practicing; you just do whatever goes through your head. You try anything...you experiment." Children therefore need to do something with their hands or later they will be incapable of grasping not just a violin, for example, but also "an idea that comes easily when you can remember what such a thing feels like and how it behaves in your hand."

Mr. Wilson's concern is that today's schools have systematically and

rapidly begun to eliminate a whole class of education, such as music instruction, that involves children's physical interactions with real objects in the real world in favor of computer-generated education in which a child never has to use his hands except on a keyboard or a mouse. If this happens, he says, children of today are in real danger of losing motor skills that are necessary to the development of creative thinking.

Thank You to Audition Helpers

Heartfelt thanks go to the following parents who volunteered their time to assist at the fall auditions:

Jacqueline Juhasz	Jo-Ann Chieffalo	Emily Blair	Alice Cooney
Samantha Heilweil	Yuko Ike	Betsy Sharlach	Cheryl Sickler
Charles Morgan	MaryAnn Bradshaw	Lynden Magnoli	Judith Battaglino
Therese Case	Pamela Kaufman	Norma Brown	Dorothy Curran
Valerie Szeto	John Harmon	Cynthia Bess	M'Liss Conetta
Jean Jacobson	Maureen Papp	Bethany Mihaly	Beatrice Robertson
Joon Shortell	Karin Mengwall	Celeste Arvanitis	Barbara Orenstein
Barbara Sager	Janis Dean	Marcia Minehan	Serena Jourdan
Ruth Lipsitz	Barrie Meulmester	Joan Burgess	Debbie Low-Tufo
Dorothy Domeika	Jane Brennan	Diane Parrish	Susan Rosen
Anne Farrow	Julie Smith	Joan Penchuk	Clair Tan
Jana Bertkau	Lynn Skalka	Deborah Lonsdale	Trevor Viechweg

Special thanks go to Sharon Schroeder, who arranged meals for the conductors and staff and to Shelley Bayne, who manned the desk over the weekend in Carolyn Phillips' absence.

String Instrument Care Guide

COURTESY OF ATELIER CONSTANTIN POPESCU

Tips, Tricks and Troubleshooting

MY PEGS ARE STICKING OR SLIPPING. WHAT CAN I DO?

Normal usage will eventually cause both the peg and the peg hole to wear, which may result in the pegs slipping or sticking, making tuning difficult. Ordinary chalk, applied to the areas of contact between the peg and peg box (which show up as shiny areas on the peg shaft) can help provide more grip. The operation of pegs that stick or are difficult to rotate may be improved by the use of peg dope or lead from a soft graphite pencil applied to the contact areas. Eventually, pegs may wear to the extent that replacement pegs will need to be fitted by a qualified repairperson.

WHEN DO I NEED TO CHANGE STRINGS?

Strings will eventually lose their original responsiveness. Replace aging strings at regular intervals, commensurate with use. For some players, it may be a few months; for others, a few years. A general rule of thumb is to change strings every six months or so. (Note: keep an extra set of strings in your case! Mrs. Phillips.)

HOW DO I CHANGE THE STRINGS ON MY INSTRUMENT?

Replace strings one at a time, to prevent the sound post from falling, and reduce stress on the instrument itself. Before removing the old strings, inspect the area around the nut and bridge; if the strings are being pinched, or have cut deeply into the grooves (they may even be flush with the top of the nut or bridge!), take the instrument to a qualified repairperson for service. The strings should rest roughly a third of the way into the grooves.

After removing the old string, check the grooves in the nut and bridge for wear or sharp edges. A bit of soft pencil lead applied in the grooves will reduce friction and help the string slide smoothly over the bridge or nut.

When string adjusters are not being used, pass replacement strings through the tailpiece holes from underneath the tailpiece. The string should then extend straight from the tailpiece hole, over the saddle or fret, to the bridge - do not thread the string back through the ball or loop at the end of the string. Wind the string on the pegs so that the string passes over the peg and not under it, and progresses from the peg hole towards the peg box walls. Make sure that the string does not overlap and cross over itself, or contact the peg box wall.

Whether steel, nylon, or gut, take the time to gradually bring the string up to pitch. Avoid over-tuning, which may damage the strings, and guard against the top of the bridge being pulled forward as new strings are being brought up to pitch.

Lessons in the Schools

The Norwalk Youth Symphony has initiated a most exciting program this fall called *Lessons in the Schools*. Through this effort, 15 youngsters from the Norwalk middle schools are able to take a 1/2 hour private music lesson once a week after school at West Rocks Middle School for a minimal cost of \$5 per lesson. Violin, viola and cello instruction is available. The teachers for the program are professionals from the Connecticut Music School of Westport and include Millie Piekos, Nathan Brown, Adrian Mackiewicz, Kenneth Kuo and Todd Woodard. Students were selected through an application/recommendation process by their school music teachers, David Durrell, (school coordinator for the program and music teacher at West Rocks Middle School), and Carolyn Phillips (Executive Director of the Norwalk Youth Symphony). Criteria included talent, responsibility and need. Van service for those who have no transportation of their own is provided, as is supervision for students who must wait for their lessons. Lessons started October 13, and we are on our way!

Support for this program comes from the Darien United Way, Summit Bank, the Norwalk & Wilton United Way and the Norwalk Education Fund. We thank these donors profusely for their generosity.

Boutique

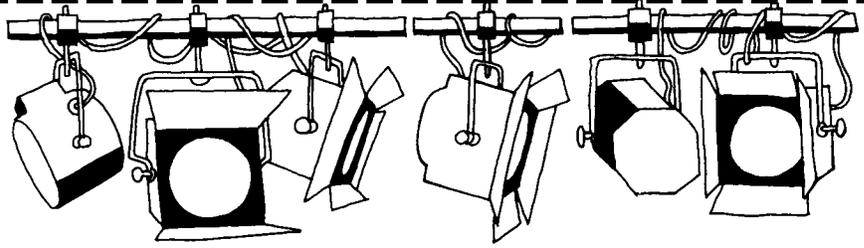
The Boutique has many items for sale with the NYS logo, including T-shirts, mugs, magnets, key chains, luggage tags, note pads, and the like. You can also buy flowers there for your special musician at the November 18 concert for \$5 per bouquet. In addition, a special **CHRISTMAS BOUTIQUE**, which will feature unique items for music teachers and parents, will be held on December 9 during rehearsal (9:00 AM-noon).

Library

The NYS has recently begun to form a book library, which is comprised of volumes, both fiction and non-fiction, that relate to the subject of music. Our collection is very small as yet, and we are looking for suggestions of titles to add to it. Also, if you would like to make a contribution towards the purchase of a book in memory of someone or just as a gift to the Symphony, we would be delighted to receive it.

Send your suggestions and donations to:
NYS, P O Box 73, Norwalk, CT 06856-0073.

Spotlight on Teachers



Katherine Dorn is a violin teacher in Danbury who has been the instructor of many NYS string players over the past several years. Ms. Dorn received a bachelor of music degree from Western Connecticut State University, where she studied under Eric Lewis. She also numbers Rachmael

Weinstock, late of the Manhattan School of Music, as one of her teachers. Ensembles that Ms. Dorn performs with include the Camerata Strings and the Camerata Chamber Orchestra. She also free-lances with the Norwalk, Greenwich and Ridgefield Symphonies and with

other local groups. During the past summer, she worked with the Manhattan String Quartet Chamber Music Camp at West Conn. We are delighted to recognize her as one of our "Spotlight on Teachers" featured musicians.

Treasurer's Report

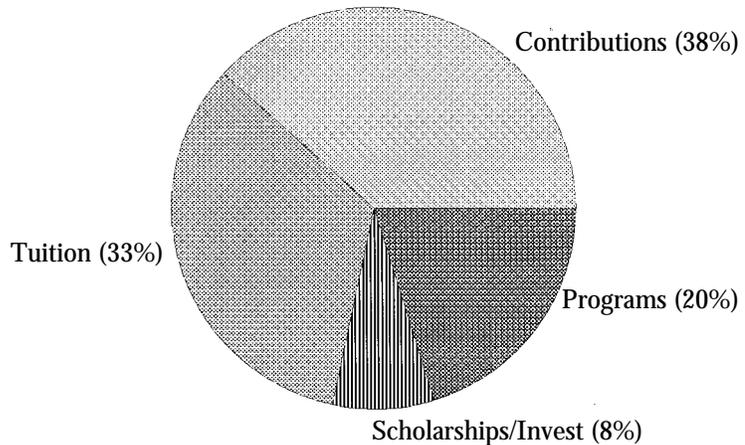
How does a family income of \$230,000 sound? Pretty good? Well, how about if the family has 250 members? That's the operating budget of the NYS, which comes to \$920 per child. We collect about \$400 in tuition and ticket revenue from each musician, excluding scholarship costs, so we have a major gap to close each year. You can see from the pie charts that tuition alone covers only about a third of our costs. Contributions make up the biggest piece of the pie, at 38%.

Many parents ask now much they should contribute. There is no one right answer, but a *fair share* would be for each child to pay the full cost of the program. Those who can afford it can cover their young musician for \$500 and know that they have freed the NYS from the need to subsidize their participation. However, a gift of any size is always welcome.

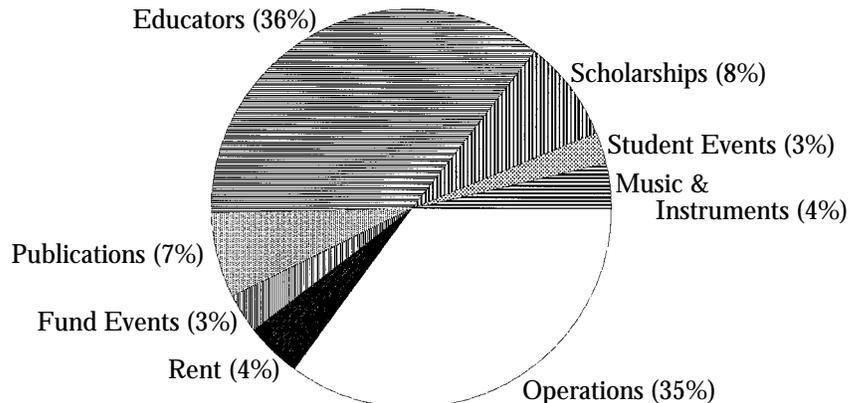
Equally important, we estimate that volunteers contribute work worth about \$100,000 per year, saving us a 50% increase in costs through their efforts. We need volunteers for every aspect of the NYS, from chaperones to snack people, and even hands to help move the chairs each week. It is both money AND the loving efforts of all parents that make this organization work.

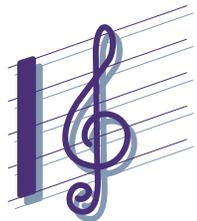
Norwalk Youth Symphony

Support - 2000



Expenses - 2000/01





Upcoming Events

November 18, 2000 – 8:00 PM: **Fall Concert.**

January 27, 2001 – 11:30AM-1:00 PM: Special program on **Performance Anxiety**, to be given by Janet Esposito.

February 4, 2001 – 4:00 PM: **Small Ensembles Recital** at Pequot Library, Southport.

February 11, 2001 – 3:00 PM: **Winter Concert.**

May 13, 2001 – 3:00 PM: **Spring Concert.**

May 16, 2001 – noon: **Concert Orchestra** plays on the Plaza at Lincoln Center.

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