



# ***The Syracuse Youth Orchestra***

## ***Student & Parent Handbook***

### ***2026-2027 Season***



**Music Director & The Syracuse Orchestra Youth Orchestra (SOYO) Conductor**  
Stephen Salem

**The Syracuse Orchestra Youth String Orchestra (SOYSO) Conductor**  
Jessica Tumajyan

**The Syracuse Youth Orchestra Administrative Coordinator**  
Ava Krauss

**Executive Director**  
Pam Murchison

**Director of Operations**  
Jon Garland

# Welcome!

Welcome to The Syracuse Youth Orchestras (SYO) for the 2026-27 Season! We are excited to have you join a thriving community of dedicated young musicians who are committed to the highest artistic excellence, teamwork, and personal growth. Drawing from the Greater Central New York Region, our organization consists of two wonderful orchestras, the Syracuse Orchestra Youth Strings Orchestra (SOYSO) and the Syracuse Orchestra Youth Orchestra (SOYO). Together, we offer a community for fostering growth and musical development in young people, rehearsing and performing on three concert cycles throughout the year.

Participation in SYO is both a privilege and a commitment. Every rehearsal, sectional, and performance depends on the preparation and participation of each and every musician as well as the support of great families. This handbook outlines the expectations that help create a positive, respectful, and rewarding experience for all students and families.



## Website

For more information, please visit our website at: [www.syracuseorchestra.org/syo-2/](http://www.syracuseorchestra.org/syo-2/)

*Find us also on Facebook and Instagram @TheSyracuseOrchestra*

## The Syracuse Youth Orchestra Staff

### Music Director & SOYO Conductor

Stephen Salem

### SOYSO Conductor

Jessica Tumajyan

### Director of Operations

Jon Garland

### Executive Director

Pam Murchison

### Librarian

Kyle Jones

### SYO Administrative Coordinator

Ava Krauss

Email: [syo@syracuseorchestra.org](mailto:syo@syracuseorchestra.org)

Box Office: 315.434.5643/[info@syracuseorchestra.org](mailto:info@syracuseorchestra.org)



## SYO Season Schedules

The complete rehearsal and concert schedule for the season is provided on the next two pages for both SOYSO and SOYO. All rehearsals, sectionals, and performances occur on Sundays. Please make note of all important dates. The season schedule can also be found on the SYO website.

# Syracuse Orchestra Youth Strings Orchestra (SOYSO)

## 2026-27 Season Schedule

Rehearsal: 4-6pm

Location: Academic II Building (Recital Hall)



### Cycle 1

Sept 13  
Sept 20  
Sept 27  
Oct 4  
Oct 11  
Oct 18  
Oct 25      Sectionals with TSO Musicians  
Nov 1  
Nov 8  
Nov 15      Dress Rehearsal  
**Nov 22**      **Concert at 3pm @ TBA (arrival time 1:45pm)**

### Cycle 2

Dec 6  
Dec 13  
Dec 20  
Jan 3  
Jan 10  
**Jan 16**      **Spotlight Concert on Masterworks 3 Concert with The Syracuse Orchestra @ Crouse-Hinds (Concert 6:30pm)**  
Jan 17  
Jan 24      Sectionals with TSO Musicians  
Jan 31      Dress Rehearsal  
**Feb 7**      **Concert at 3pm @ TBA (arrival time 1:45pm)**

### Cycle 3

Feb 28  
March 7  
March 14  
March 21      Sectionals with TSO Musicians  
Apr 4  
Apr 25  
May 2  
May 9  
May 16      Dress Rehearsal  
**May 23**      **Concert at 3pm @ Solvay HS (arrival time 1:45pm)**

# Syracuse Orchestra Youth Orchestra (SOYO)

## 2026-27 Season Schedule

Rehearsal: 4-6:30pm

Location: Academic II Building (Rehearsal Room)



### Cycle 1

Sept 13  
Sept 20  
Sept 27  
Oct 4 \* Sectionals with TSO Musicians & Mr. Salem  
Oct 11  
Oct 18  
Oct 25  
Nov 1  
Nov 8  
Nov 15 Dress Rehearsal  
**Nov 22 Concert at 3pm @ TBA (arrival time 1:00pm)**

### Cycle 2

Dec 6  
Dec 13  
Dec 14 *Concerto Competition @ Inspiration Hall (4-8pm)*  
Dec 20  
Jan 3  
Jan 10  
**Jan 16 Side-By-Side Masterworks 3 Concert with The Syracuse Orchestra @ Crouse-Hinds Civic Center (Rehearsal 10am-12:30pm, Concert 7:30pm)**  
Jan 17 \* Sectionals with TSO Musicians & Mr. Salem  
Jan 24  
Jan 31 Dress Rehearsal  
**Feb 7 Concert at 3pm @ TBA (arrival time 1:00pm)**

### Cycle 3

Feb 28  
March 7  
March 14  
March 21  
Apr 4 \* Sectionals with TSO Musicians & Mr. Salem  
Apr 25  
May 2  
May 9  
May 16 Dress Rehearsal  
**May 23 Concert at 3pm @ Solvay HS (arrival time 1:00pm)**

***SOYO Sectionals with TSO Musicians will occur by section (i.e Violin 1, Flutes, Trumpets, etc.) as a pull-out during rehearsal(s) of each cycle.***

# Attendance Policy



Each SYO ensemble rehearses once a week on Sundays at Onondaga Community College in the Academic II Building. SOYSO rehearses from 4-6pm and SOYO rehearses from 4-6:30pm.

Participation in SYO is both a privilege and responsibility. Consistent attendance is essential to the success of each ensemble and the program as a whole. Because each musician contributes to the overall rehearsal environment and all performances, students are expected to participate fully throughout the season.

Attendance at all rehearsals, dress rehearsals, and concerts is absolutely essential to the success of the orchestra. It is expected that students report to rehearsals at least 15 minutes early for check-in and proper warm-up. Students are required to be present for all dress rehearsals (the rehearsal one week prior to the concert), concert soundchecks, and performances.

Unexcused absences are not tolerated. Students are allowed no more than 1 excused absence per cycle (i.e. illness or family emergencies). Unexcused absences, frequent tardiness, or exceeding the allotted number of excused absences can result in reseating, removal from the concert cycle, and/or removal from the ensemble at the discretion of the Music Director and Conductor.

Excused Absences must be requested using the Absence Request Form (available on the website and weekly newsletter) no later than 24 hours prior to the start of rehearsal. Absence Request Forms submitted later than this will be considered unexcused absences except in the case of emergencies.

## Rehearsal Expectations

*SYO musicians are expected to contribute to a focused and respectful rehearsal environment. Students should:*

- Respect all rehearsal/concert facilities and equipment.
- Follow directions from conductors and staff.
- Remain attentive throughout rehearsals.
- Refrain from unnecessary talking during rehearsals.
- Keep cell phones and electronic devices out of sight during rehearsals and performances.
- Have a pencil at all times!
- Maintain great eye contact while music making.
- Students should rehearse with the same focus, posture, and professionalism expected in performances!

## Concert Day Expectations

For the safety of all participants, once students arrive at the concert venue on the day of a performance, they must remain on-site with their ensemble in our designated areas until the conclusion of the concert. This includes watching the other groups during performance. This policy is in place because SYO assumes full responsibility and liability for all students while they are under our supervision at each venue.

# Tuition, Payment, & Assistance

## Tuition Rate

Tuition for The Syracuse Youth Orchestra is \$600 for the 2026-27 Season. Payment installments include a \$100 deposit at the time of acceptance into SYO and the remaining balance (\$500) paid before the first rehearsal. Members must complete their tuition payment or have a payment plan in place in order to participate in rehearsals.

## Payment Methods

Square.com - An individual invoice will be emailed to the parent/guardian address provided **OR**  
Check made payable to The Syracuse Orchestra, memo: Student Name  
Mail to: The Syracuse Orchestra, 709 James Street, Syracuse, NY 13203

## Refund Policy

No refunds or credits are provided for missed rehearsals due to holidays, weather cancellations, or absences. Refunds are not available if a student leaves the orchestra mid-season.

## Tuition Assistance & Discounts

SYO is committed to ensuring that all musicians who successfully audition for an ensemble are able to participate regardless of financial considerations. Musicians may apply for tuition assistance or scholarship by submitting an application. Applications will be sent in your season acceptance email.

**Application for assistance will be available in your SYO 2026-27 Acceptance email.**

***Discounts:*** A discount of \$85 per tuition is available for multiple tuitions in one immediate family unit. Please notify the SYO Manager via email with the names of students who qualify at [syo@syracuseorchestra.org](mailto:syo@syracuseorchestra.org). ***This request must be received by July 20, 2026.***

***Payment Plan:*** \$100 deposit, with remaining balance (\$500) to be paid in five installments of \$100 on the 1st of each month, September - January.

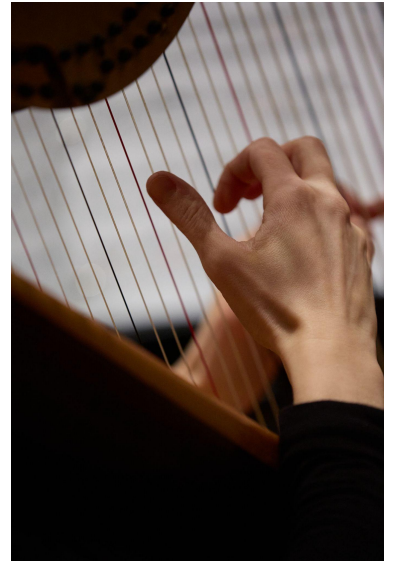
***Scholarships:*** Scholarships are available providing up to 100% coverage of a student's tuition and are available to students/families who demonstrate need.

***Work Study:*** Work Study students provide volunteer support to SYO on rehearsal and concert days through setting up rehearsal spaces, taking attendance, and more, with the possibility of additional opportunities outside of rehearsal as determined by the SYO Manager and student. Tuition for Work Study students could be reduced by up to 50%.

# Music, Preparation, & Private Lessons

## Music Distribution & Collection

Music will be distributed to members of SYO both electronically and via hard copy. A few weeks prior to each cycle, SYO musicians will have access to digital practice copies on the SYO Google Drive. Hard copies in folders will then be distributed at the first rehearsal of Cycle 1 and a few weeks prior to the start of Cycles 2 and 3. Please work on your music as soon as you receive the electronic copies. Folders will be collected after each concert cycle at the conclusion of the performance. It is each musician's responsibility to take good care of their music and folder. If musicians do not come to rehearsal with their music, an additional copy will not be available.



## SOYO Music Deposit

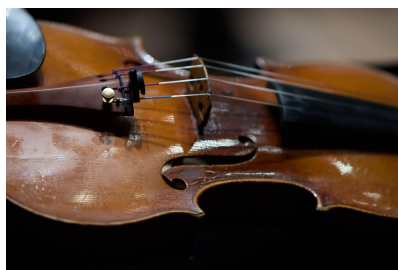
New in the 2026-27 season, we will be collecting a \$50 returnable Music Deposit. Each SOYO musician will receive a folder at the beginning of each cycle with an associated Folder #. These folders are to be returned with all music at the conclusion of each cycle after the concert performance (leave folders on the music stands). If any of the music or a folder is misplaced, money will be deducted from the \$50 deposit. All parts must remain in the folder while not in use.

## Music Preparation

It is the responsibility of each musician to come to rehearsals prepared. Rehearsal is a time to make music together, not a place to learn notes and rhythms. Please make every effort to raise your level of preparation as the year progresses. Make sure to have your music, a pencil, and a great attitude at every rehearsal. If you have a private teacher and/or school music teacher, it is a great idea to seek assistance from them on your music between rehearsals.

## Private Lessons

All SYO musicians are strongly urged to take regularly scheduled private music lessons on their instrument to support the level of playing in their SYO ensemble. Especially due to the advanced caliber of repertoire performed by the Syracuse Orchestra Youth Orchestra (SOYO), all SOYO students are highly encouraged to study regularly with a private teacher on their instrument. The complexity and musical demands of the ensemble literature require a high level of individual preparation that cannot be fully addressed during rehearsals alone. If you need help finding a private teacher, please contact the SYO Coordinator for a list of teachers on your instrument.



## Principal & Assistant Principal Responsibilities

Principals and Assistant Principals are the lead musicians of a section and serve a vital leadership role within the orchestra. They are both a musical leader and a role model for their peers.

Responsibilities of Principal & Assistant Principal Players include:

- *Preparing your music thoroughly before each rehearsal.*
- *Leading with confidence and professionalism.*
- *Setting the musical and stylistic standard.*
- *Encouraging positive, respectful, and professional rehearsal habits.*
- *Assisting section members with musical questions.*
- *Helping unify bowings, articulations, style, dynamics, and ensemble playing.*
- *Communicating respectfully with conductors and staff.*
- *Supporting younger musicians and newer members.*

Leadership should always be positive, respectful, and collaborative!



## Dress Code: Rehearsals & Concerts

SYO students are required to wear clothing that is professional in appearance following the specifications detailed below for both concerts and rehearsals.

**Concert Attire** is ALL BLACK.

- Top: Long-sleeved black dress shirt/blouse **OR** floor/ankle length long-sleeved black dress
- Bottom: Black dress pants **OR** Floor/ankle length black skirt
- Black socks or tights, Black dress shoes
- Long black tie (Optional)



### Rehearsal Dress Code

All musicians are expected to dress properly and present a neat, clean, professional, and respectful personal appearance at rehearsals.



# SYO Code of Conduct

*For Students and Parents/Guardians*

2026-2027 Season

Participation in the Syracuse Youth Orchestra (SYO) is a privilege that comes with a shared responsibility and commitment for both students and families to maintain a positive, respectful, and focused learning environment. All students and their parents/guardians are asked to read and sign this Code of Conduct to acknowledge their understanding and commitment to the 2026-27 SYO Student/Parent Handbook, including but not limited to the following:

## **Expectations for Students**

- Treat all conductors, staff, coaches, volunteers, and fellow musicians with the utmost respect.
- Attend all rehearsals and performances as outlined in the season schedule - weekly rehearsals, sectionals, side-by-side performance (SOYO), dress rehearsals, soundchecks, and concerts.
- Arrive on time (early!) and prepared for all rehearsals and performances with instrument, music, and a pencil.
- Practice regularly and thoroughly. Rehearsal is a place to make music not learn notes.
- Follow rehearsal and concert expectations, including staying attentive, supporting your section, and modeling professionalism at all times.
- Follow the dress code.
- Care for borrowed music and equipment with respect.
- Demonstrate integrity, responsibility, and a positive attitude at all times.

## **Expectations for Parents/Guardians**

- Support your child's consistent attendance. Ensure they arrive on time (early!).
- Communicate promptly with SYO staff regarding absences, conflicts, or concerns.
- Ensure thorough preparation and commitment to musical growth prior to each rehearsal.
- Treat all staff, volunteers, and families with the utmost respect.
- Support your child in upholding this code of conduct and reinforcing respectful behavior at all times.

## **Failure to follow this Code of Conduct may result in:**

- Verbal reminders to student
- Communication with parents/guardians
- Removal from rehearsal or performance
- Suspension or dismissal from the program without refund

## **Acknowledgment**

We have read and understand the 2026-27 SYO Student & Parent Handbook. By signing below, we agree to uphold the SYO Code of Conduct and follow its policies and expectations.

Student Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

***Please print and sign, then email to [syo@syracuseorchestra.org](mailto:syo@syracuseorchestra.org) by August 1.***

*A submitted signed code of conduct is required to participate in SYO.*