



Northwest Youth Symphony Association

**2024-2025
Member
Handbook**

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Mission Statement

Our mission is to teach values of teamwork and excellence through musical training, enabling talented young musicians to advance in musical performance.

Northwest Youth Symphony Association (NYSA) is a nonprofit organization which has been offering orchestral training and experience for talented young musicians in Northwest Washington since 1999. It consists of three, geographically distinct branches: Fidalgo Youth Symphony in Mount Vernon, Mt Baker Youth Symphony in Bellingham, Whidbey Island Youth Symphony in Oak Harbor and Salish Youth Symphony in Langley. Three levels of symphony are offered: Sinfonette, Junior and Youth. **Sharyn Peterson** is the talented and highly motivating Artistic Director. The Conductors for each location are:

Youth – Sharyn Peterson	Mount Vernon and Bellingham
Junior – Malcolm Peterson	Mount Vernon and Bellingham
Sinfonette – Eva Mason	Mount Vernon
Youth - Sean Brown	Oak Harbor
Sinfonette/Junior - Karis Mills	Oak Harbor
Sinfonete/Junior/Youth - Aniela Perry	Langley

The groups meet for rehearsal weekly during the academic year and join together to perform the following concerts: Fall, Holiday, Spring, and Season Finale.

Orchestra Composition

Sinfonette is for beginner musicians with little experience. This program is designed to help introduce musicians into our more advanced programs. There is no formal audition.

Junior Symphony is designed to accommodate musicians up to the age of 24, with a minimum of 2 years private study, or permission of the Artistic Director. They perform intermediate symphonic works and join the Youth Symphony to create the "Festival" piece featured at each concert.

Youth Symphony musicians are the most experienced musicians in our organization, up to the age of 24. They perform challenging symphonic literature on an advanced level.

Please note: College Credit at Skagit Valley College may be available to students enrolled in NYSA. Ask our Board members, or e-mail president@fysmbys.org for details and college credit application procedures.

Ensemble groups are made up of Youth Symphony musicians and alumni demonstrating fine musical skills. They are the "Ambassadors" for the Youth Symphony, and perform at special events. Members are chosen by the Artistic Director based on level of involvement in the symphony, skill, and leadership potential:

- Ensemble membership is by invitation; you may ask to be considered if you think you meet the qualifications;
- Selection is an honor, and carries with it the responsibility to maintain the highest standards of conduct and dedication;
- Members must be currently enrolled in the Youth Symphony or alumni;
- Rehearsal will be held Mount Vernon on Thursday evenings at 6 p.m., on non-sectional nights. Please see the rehearsal schedule for this information.
- Regular attendance is essential to the group; a limit on absences will be made at the discretion of the Artistic Director.
- Ensemble is highly dependent on volunteers willing to coordinate ensembles. Please contact the NYSA volunteer coordinator if you'd be willing to volunteer for this position.

Audition & Registration

How to join

Audition/Registration nights are scheduled in August/September before the first rehearsal and by appointment before the start of a concert session. All interested musicians are asked to email registration@fysmbys.org to schedule a specific audition time. Auditions are required so that the students can be placed in the appropriate group according to their skill level (see Audition Preparation below). More details can be found on our website www.fysmbys.org.

Students need to register following their audition by completing a Membership Application. The member form must be completed before a student may practice with the Symphony. These can be filled out at Audition/Registration night or downloaded from our web site (www.fysmbys.org under "New Member" or "Returning Member").

Returning members are not required to audition unless advancing from Sinfonette to Junior or Junior to Youth Symphony, or at the Artistic Director's request. A Membership Application must be completed each year.

New musicians are welcomed at the beginning of each concert session. Invite your friends and acquaintances who may be interested!

Audition Preparation

Auditions for new and advancing members consist of the following:

Junior and Youth:

- Strings: One major and one minor scale of your choice (most advanced)
2 minutes of your most advanced solo work
Demonstrate sight-reading ability
- Winds: Same as strings, plus a chromatic scale at most advanced length
- Brass: Same as strings
- Percussion: Play a short section of a band or solo piece on snare or xylophone and/or timpani, showing current advancement.

Tuition

Member forms and tuition information can be found on the web site www.fysmbys.org.

Forms of payment include:

1. Credit card via card reader
2. PayPal
3. By check or cash on registration night or by prior arrangement on rehearsal nights (email the treasurer at treasurer@fysmbys.org)
4. By check via mail to: Northwest Youth Symphony Association
PO Box 692
Mt Vernon, WA 98273

Payment Options:

1. Pay full tuition by **Sept. 28**. We strongly encourage this, as it simplifies record-keeping by the volunteers.
2. Two payments: half due by **the last Thur in September** and **the last Thur in January**.

Financial Assistance: NYSA has funds available to support students in need of financial assistance. If you would like to apply for financial assistance, please speak with the registrar at registration and fill out a Financial Assistance form. This form can also be found on our web site www.fysmbys.org under "New Members" or "Returning Members."

Volunteering

The conductors and coaches are the only paid staff. Because of this, the volunteer led Board of Directors needs YOUR help to keep our wonderful organization running. If everyone helps a little, the many tasks needed for the rehearsals and concerts to run smoothly can be completed.

Families are requested to volunteer 10 hours each year. If you have not already indicated your area of interest while registering, e-mail our Volunteer Coordinator at volunteer@fysmbys.org and sign up to help in one of the following ways:

Board of Directors	Wardrobe Coordinator	Instrument donation
Stage set-up	Stage breakdown	Backstage help
Poster distribution	Photography	Assistant Music Librarian
Raffle Coordinator	Videography	Raffle basket donation
Fundraising	Raffle ticket sales	Solicit donations in cash or kind
Promotional events	Concert program ad sales	Safety Officer

Rehearsals and Rehearsal Attendance

Every musician plays an important role in achieving artistic success. Symphony members depend upon each other, not only at the concert, but at every rehearsal in order to achieve performance goals. Consistent attendance at rehearsals is essential.

We do recognize that our musicians are often VERY busy in several activities. Please check the Symphony calendar (found on the back cover of the student's music notebook and on our website) early for scheduling conflicts that you may have during the year and let the Artistic Director/Conductor know as soon as possible if an absence is anticipated. This includes illness as well as any school-related commitment. The Artistic Director/Conductor will make a final determination regarding participation in the upcoming concert if repeated absences occur within any concert session.

Consistent attendance is essential. Arrive early enough to warm up and tune your instrument.

Rehearsal cancellation: In the event of inclement weather, the Board will decide no later than 3pm on the day of rehearsal regarding cancellation. However, each family is encouraged to decide what they deem safe for themselves regarding attendance. We encourage you to prioritize your safety and well-being.

Rehearsal breakdown: Following rehearsals, Youth Symphony members are requested to help put away equipment and pick up trash.

Private lessons outside of symphony are highly encouraged. While we cannot require this of our students, private lessons increase the quality of our symphony as a whole. Financial assistance for private lessons may be available during the year for those with financial need.

Rehearsal Times and Locations

Fidalgo Youth Symphony

When: Thursday evenings starting the first Thursday after Labor Day. The festival piece played jointly by Junior and Youth is practiced from 6:30 - 7:00 pm

Sinfonette	5:30 - 6:30 pm
Junior	5:30 - 7:00 pm
Youth	6:30 - 8:45 pm

Where: First United Methodist Church, 1607 E Division St, Mount Vernon, WA 98274

Mount Baker Youth Symphony

When: Monday evenings starting the first Monday after Labor Day. The festival piece played jointly by Junior and Youth is practiced from 6:30 - 7:00 pm

Junior	5:30 - 7:00 pm
Youth	6:30 - 8:45 pm

Where: Trinity Lutheran Church, 119 Texas St, Bellingham, WA 98225

Whidbey Island Youth Symphony

When: Monday evenings starting the first Monday after Labor Day. The festival piece played jointly by Junior and Youth is practiced from 7:45 - 8:30 pm

Sinfonette	7:00 - 7:30 pm
Junior	7:30 - 8:30 pm
Youth	7:30 - 9:00 pm

Where: Oak Harbor Lutheran Church, 1253 NW 2nd Ave, Oak Harbor, WA 98277

Salish Youth Symphony

When: Monday evenings starting the first Monday after Labor Day. The festival piece played jointly by Junior and Youth time TBA.

Sinfonette	6:00 - 7:00 pm
Junior	7:00 - 8:00 pm
Youth	TBA

Where: St. Hubert Catholic Church, 804 Third St, Langley, WA 98260

Sectionals/Coaches

Elevating musical proficiency is paramount at NYSA, and to ensure optimal success, we have enlisted the expertise of accomplished professional musicians (coaches). These highly skilled and experienced coaches dedicate their time to attend 7-8 rehearsals, offering specialized training to students within their respective sections. Attendance and punctuality on sectional nights, or "rehearsals with coaches" nights, are of utmost importance. These sessions serve as invaluable opportunities for students to receive private coaching, tailored to enhance their individual and collective musical abilities.

Please see our web site www.fysmbys.org for a current list of sectional coaches.

Current Year Concert Calendar

Please see our web site www.fysmbys.org for the current year rehearsal and concert calendar.

***Note:** *Concert dates, times, venues, and music selections are subject to change throughout the season as circumstances require.*

Section Leader/Principal Guidelines

(implemented at the discretion of the Artistic Director)

The purpose of the Section Leader/Principal/Concert Master:

- To provide a liaison between the conductor and the section
- To provide leadership for the section/team
- To set an example of fine ensemble participation

- To demonstrate technical excellence to the section/team
- To act as spokesperson for the section/team

Specific duties:

- Arrive 5 minutes early
- Assist with logistics of set-up (does my section have all the chairs, stands, and music it needs?)
- Assist with any tuning needs within the section/team
- Address any questions or problems to the Symphony Conductor or President of the Board.
- Welcome all section members, especially new ones, and seek to develop enthusiasm for the music-making experience
- In the absence of the Coach, make decisions regarding bowing, fingering, and breathing (winds) and relay the information to the section/team
- Set the best possible example of respectful behavior and attitude toward those in authority
- Set the best possible example of musical proficiency and preparedness

Code of Conduct

The Artistic Director, Staff and Board of Directors are committed to providing musical experiences in a safe, wholesome environment for all students.

1. All students are expected to willingly comply with the instructions of the NYSA directors, coaching staff and board members.
2. Any musician who exhibits inappropriate behavior at rehearsals, concerts, or activities jeopardizes their good standing in the orchestra. Examples include, but are not limited to: disrespect toward other musicians or adults, verbal or physical threats toward others, horseplay, inappropriate physical conduct with others, inappropriate language, inappropriate dress, or any other behavior that undermines the integrity of the Symphony. Inappropriate conduct may result in immediate forfeiture of membership in the Symphony. Final determination regarding dismissal will be made by the Artistic Director and NYSA President.
3. Disrespect of directors, coaches, other students or staff, put-downs, swearing, vulgarity, rudeness, rowdiness or chronic negativity will NOT be tolerated.
4. If a student is found to be engaging in inappropriate behavior as specified in No. 2 or No. 3, the following warning system will be enforced:
 - First Warning: Parents/guardians will be notified, and both students and parents/guardians are expected to sign the behavior contract.
 - Second Warning: Parents/guardians must attend the next two rehearsals with the student to facilitate behavior changes, provide guidance, and offer support.
 - Third Warning: The student will be asked to leave, and their membership in NYSA will be revoked without a refund. This step is taken to ensure the comfort and productivity of the entire orchestra.
 - Additionally, immediate dismissal from the program may be considered as an option. In cases of immediate dismissal, membership fees in the Symphony will be forfeited. The final decision regarding dismissal rests with the Artistic Director and NYSA President.
5. Musicians must handle instruments and other equipment with care and responsibility. Damage to instruments or equipment due to negligence may result in consequences.

6. The youth symphony values diversity and inclusivity. Musicians are expected to treat everyone, regardless of their background, race, gender or other characteristics, with respect and dignity.
7. No drugs or alcohol allowed. This includes all students and staff. First infraction the person will be sent home with no warnings or refund.
8. Public displays of affection are not allowed (brief side hugs okay). Wandering off alone or with just one friend is prohibited, unless permission is granted for a specific task.
9. Ongoing medical needs are YOUR responsibility. Bring all that you need for any personal conditions. A staff member will assist with distribution if necessary.

Expulsion Re-Application Process

If a student is expelled, when the student's expulsion period is nearing the end, the student may petition for readmission. NYSA will require re-applications to be submitted between June 30 and July 15. A readmission meeting will be held between the student(s) and members of the board. The board will then make their determination whether the student is accepted to return to the program and notify the student/family of their decision, within 14 days of the readmission meeting.

Symphony Essentials

Practice and Preparation

All students are expected to come to rehearsals prepared, with their music and instruments in order. It is necessary to spend time practicing for rehearsals since this music is challenging, and needs both individual and group preparation. By the fourth rehearsal the student should be able to correctly play all the notes and rhythm in their parts. This will enable our orchestra rehearsal to focus on ensemble precision and interpretation. It is expected that each student will practice their Symphony music and that there will be a discernible improvement in the part each week.

Music

NYSA owns an extensive library of orchestral works. Music is issued at the beginning of each concert session. It is the student's responsibility to take care of it and bring it to rehearsals and concerts.

Rehearsal Behavior

- Walk (do not run) in the halls. Respect the facility, leaving each room as you found it.
- Play ONLY your own instrument during breaks and rehearsals.
- Food, drink (except bottled water) and gum are not permitted in rehearsal space.
- Brass instruments, please make arrangements to empty spit valves onto paper or other appropriate receptacle.
- Avoid casual conversation during rehearsal; stay focused on the task at hand.
- Avoid foot-tapping.
- Prepare sections of your music each week, with a plan to have all of the notes and rhythms mastered well in advance of the concerts.
- Arrive early enough to be ready to play at the start time. Lateness is very disruptive and does a disservice to you and your colleagues.
- Rehearsals are intended to establish group unity in musical expression, not teach the individual notes; this is your challenge during the week. Take the part to your private teachers!
- Cell phones are to be put away during rehearsal.

- Inappropriate displays of affection will not be allowed on the premises during rehearsals and performances.
- Symphony rents certain spaces for rehearsal and sectionals. **Musicians should access only those areas designated for that purpose.**

Safety

Along with all the great music they play, the safety of our students is foremost in our minds. In order to maximize this effort, we are asking parents of all Sinfonette and Junior, as well as any younger members of Youth, to bring their children into the lobby before rehearsal and pick them up in the lobby afterward. During the winter it is very dark in the parking area. It would be impossible to ensure the safety of so many children leaving the building at the same time to look for parents in the parking lot.

Students are asked to remain in the lobby while waiting to be picked up. We ask that they not roam throughout the building.

Concert Essentials

Ticket Purchase at McIntyre Hall

It is strongly advised to purchase tickets in advance of the concert in order to avoid long lines at the box office and delay of the concert. Tickets may be purchased at the Box Office in person or by phone (360-416-7727) Tuesday–Thursday, 10:00 am–2:00 pm two weeks prior to the concert or online (\$5 convenience fee). The Box Office is open at 10:00 am on the day of the concert in order for tickets to be purchased when students are dropped off for rehearsal prior to the concert.

Concert Dress

NYSA maintains a standard of dress for concert performances because a simple, integrated visual appearance promotes the image of the orchestra as a team. Any musician not dressed according to this dress code will be required to change into something provided by the Board of Directors. Parents are asked to be mindful of dress requirements and assist musicians with attire discrepancies prior to arrival at a concert. Bins of used clothing will be offered on rehearsal nights before each concert.

All musicians must arrive for pre-concert rehearsal in their concert attire. There will be no changing in the backstage areas. This maximizes rehearsal time and ensures that all participants are “stage ready” well before the performance is to begin.

Sinfonette & Junior Symphony

Ladies: white long-sleeved blouse, ankle- or floor-length black skirt or dress slacks, black stockings/socks, and black shoes (holiday accessories allowed at December concert only)

Gentlemen: white long-sleeved shirt, black bow tie (holiday colors allowed at December concert only), black trousers, black socks, and black shoes

Youth Symphony

Ladies: black long-sleeved blouse, ankle- or floor-length black skirt or dress slacks, black stockings/socks, and black shoes (holiday accessories allowed at December concert only)

Gentlemen: black jacket and slacks, black bow tie (holiday colors allowed at December concert only), white long-sleeved shirt, black socks, and black shoes

Concert Snacks

Concerts can be long for the students, so we are asking parents to provide a healthy snack to share. Our volunteer coordinator (volunteer@fysmbys.org) will e-mail the designated families prior to each concert. Please avoid loose powdered sugar or fillings or orange colored snacks (i.e. Doritos or Cheetos) which could spoil concert clothes; healthy snacks are preferred and appreciated. No sugary drinks please. Deliver your goodies backstage upon arrival for rehearsal–lobby personnel cannot carry snacks there for you.

Performance Behavior

- Friends/family may not remain backstage after escorting students in/dropping off snacks.
- Volunteer parents with backstage passes are present for security, guidance, and discipline. Please be respectful to them at all times.
- Inappropriate displays of affection will not be allowed on the premises.
- Warm up with full and strong tone, not tentatively.
- Keep posture excellent; spine straight, legs uncrossed.
- Jewelry should not be distracting; visually or audibly.
- For the Conductor's first entrance, stand together at attention and wait to be seated.
- During a solo section, don't move unnecessarily; it distracts.
- Never talk to your neighbor during a concert.
- Control your facial expressions. They are dismayingly obvious and distracting to the audience. Never acknowledge mistakes physically.
- At the end of the piece, remain seated until signaled to stand, and smile when applauded, no matter how you feel you performed.
- Congratulate yourself for the hundreds of notes you played right, and do not berate yourself for the few you missed! Have fun sharing great masterpieces with your family and friends.

Financial Operations

Northwest Youth Symphony Association operates on a fiscal year that begins on July 1 and ends on June 30. All operational expenses are funded by tuition, private and corporate donations, and grants. Our concert costs are covered by concert admission charges and donations.

Northwest Youth Symphony Association is a private, nonprofit organization, recognized by the IRS as complying with section 501(c)3. Donations to NYSA are tax-deductible. As a nonprofit, it is essential that we receive donations and grant money. This allows us to fund our mission, pay overhead costs, expand our instrument offerings, pay for professional coaching, offer tuition assistance and seek more ways to improve our program, while keeping the cost of tuition down.

Fundraising: NYSA is currently involved in several fundraising efforts:

- Selling pizza at Thursday rehearsals
- Selling flowers and one raffle per year at concerts
- Ordering and selling t-shirts and zipper hoodies
- Busking events throughout the year
- Schedule a professional photographer to take photos of the musicians in their concert wear and sell the photos to parents
- A fundraising/auction event
- Corporate and Individual Gifts

How to Reach Us

<p>Web address www.fysmbys.org</p>	<p>This is the place to get the most up-to-date information - concert calendar, tuition, policies, and contact information.</p>
<p>Artistic Director/Youth Symphony Conductor Sharyn Peterson E-mail: artisticdirector@fysmbys.org</p>	<p>Questions regarding music or playing in the symphony</p>
<p>Financial treasurer@fysmbys.org Northwest Youth Symphony Association P.O. Box 692 Mt Vernon, WA 98273-0692</p>	<p>Contact the treasurer with questions regarding tuition, or Mail your payments to this address</p>
<p>Registration/Auditions registration@fysmbys.org</p>	<p>Questions regarding auditions and registration</p>
<p>Volunteer Coordinator volunteer@fysmbys.org</p>	<p>Questions regarding volunteering</p>
<p>Fundraising fundraising@fysmbys.org</p>	<p>Questions regarding participating in fundraising or making donations</p>
<p>Social Media Coordinator socialmedia@fysmbys.org</p>	<p>Questions regarding participating in managing or posting to social media</p>
<p>Email info@fysmbys.org</p>	<p>General questions and registration</p>

Board of Directors

Daisy Loeffler, President
E-mail: president@fysmbys.org

Sara Iverson, Secretary
E-mail: secretary@fysmbys.org

Louise Niccum, Treasurer
E-Mail: treasurer@fysmbys.org

Sharyn Peterson, Artistic Director
E-mail: artisticdirector@fysmbys.org

Chrissy Larreau, Registrar
E-mail: registration@fysmbys.org

Kristin Robinson, Volunteer Coordinator
E-mail: volunteer@fysmbys.org

Victoria Baker, Social Media Coordinator
E-mail: socialmedia@fysmbys.org

Mike Kusick, Member at Large

Contact the President for general information or to see how you can help keep the symphony going strong!

Please remember that the Board of Directors are volunteers who are committed to keeping the symphony running smoothly.