



# Binghamton Youth Symphony Orchestra

## Handbook

Reviewed/Revised By: B. G. Peters/E. Bartlett

Approved By: BYSO Board of Directors

Revised: June 2021

## INTRODUCTION

The Binghamton Youth Symphony Orchestra was established in 1961 to promote the musical education of young people in elementary, middle, and high schools in the Southern Tier of New York and in the Northern Tier region of Pennsylvania.

It was incorporated as The Binghamton Youth Symphony, Inc. in 1984 as a not-for-profit corporation.

The purposes of the organization are:

1. To promote the musical activities of the Binghamton Youth Symphony and the Preparatory Orchestra.
2. To promote and enrich the musical education of young people in this region.
3. To offer performance opportunities to talented musicians in elementary, middle, and high school.

## ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

### OFFICIAL MAILING ADDRESS

Letters and correspondence should be addressed to:

BYSO

P.O. Box 1235

Binghamton, New York 13902-1235

### OFFICIAL WEBSITE ADDRESS

Current information regarding the orchestra may be accessed via the BYSO website

[www.binghamtonyouthsymphony.org](http://www.binghamtonyouthsymphony.org)

General informational messages and requests may be made through our email address on the website.

### BYSO PERSONNEL LISTING

**Barry G. Peters**, BYSO Music Director and BYSO Conductor

**Amelia Wilson**, Associate Conductor, Preparatory Orchestra

# VOLUNTEERS FOR BYSO

The BYSO is administered through the Board of Directors and assisted by a number of active volunteers. Parents and friends of student members are urged to volunteer in order to enable the organization to serve our talented young musicians.

Volunteers are needed for the many areas in which the orchestra functions. The Board of Directors is a working Board and divided into committees. Volunteers would be welcome in the following committees:

- ♪ Fund Raising Committee
- ♪ Registration Committee
- ♪ Concert Committee
- ♪ Publicity, Social Media, and Web Committee
- ♪ Hospitality Committee

**The Fund Raising Committee** – needs volunteers to assist with planning fund raisers, and with preparation and mailing of fund raising materials.

**Registration Committee** – needs persons to oversee all aspects of registration and collection of participation fees for both orchestras and to assist with auditions for new members.

**Concert Committee** – needs volunteers to assist with concerts, stage management, rehearsals, and other pre-concert preparations.

**Publicity, Social Media, Web Committee** – needs persons to design and print posters, distribute posters, prepare press releases, and attend to the website and Facebook pages.

**Hospitality Committee** – needs volunteers to assist in the planning and preparation of the alumni reunion, end-of-year picnic, post-concert receptions, and other social events approved by the Board of Directors.

The BYSO accepts many in-kind services. If you or your company can provide a service to the orchestra, this would be greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions, or would like to volunteer, please go to the website and use the contact form.

# ASSURANCE OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

It is the policy of the Binghamton Youth Symphony Orchestra, Inc., to admit members on the basis of their qualification only, and with assurance of equal opportunity and treatment regardless of race, color, creed, sex, religion, national or ethnic origin, or handicap.

## STUDENT MEMBERSHIP

1. Any instrumentalist who is interested in membership in the BYSO may be considered a candidate provided that:
  - a. A student is in elementary, middle, or high school. Students enrolled in public school must be a member of their school instrumental music program. String students must belong to their school orchestra and wind/brass/percussion students must belong to their school band. Home school students must be taking private lessons on their respective instrument.
  - b. A written email is made to the Audition Coordinator using the audition email: [bysoauditions@gmail.com](mailto:bysoauditions@gmail.com)
  - c. The applicant qualifies, on the basis of an audition, to the satisfaction of the conductor and/or audition panel.  
Students must play with acceptable intonation, clear tone, use of the whole bow and small bows (strings), dynamic range, and vibrato. Applicants must adhere to the audition requirements for their instrument, as set forth on the website.
  - d. A vacancy exists in the orchestra for that instrument.
2. A candidate shall become a member of the orchestra when the membership fee is paid. The **non-refundable annual fee of \$195**. Due prior to attending the first rehearsal of the year. In cases of financial hardship, accepted candidates may make application to the Treasurer of the Board of Directors for an exemption.
3. An accepted candidate becomes and remains a member of the orchestra as long as he/she has paid the membership fee when due, and continues to observe the conditions stated under Student Responsibilities.
4. The conductor, on the basis of the entrance auditions, seating auditions, and section balance will determine chair assignments in the Senior Orchestra. Junior Orchestra seating will be determined by the conductor; there will be no seating auditions.

Every Seat in the Orchestra is of EQUAL IMPORTANCE!  
Challenges are **not** a part of the seating process.

## TIPS FOR ORCHESTRA MEMBERS

BREATHE	Especially important for strings. Inhale before each phrase, allowing the music to flow from you with your breath.
CUE	As in chamber music, give a small physical cue -- to yourself and others in your section - before each entrance, accent, tempo change, syncopation, or cutoff. This improves ensemble playing dramatically, when all musicians (not just section leaders) participate.
SING	In your imagination, sing the music to hear exactly how it must sound, before playing it. Make your instrument duplicate what you hear in your head. While practicing at home, try singing a phrase aloud to conceive it; then play it.
SUBDIVIDE	Feel the subdivisions of every beat inside you, especially during rests, long notes, and dotted notes. Never let the pulse subside. Take personal responsibility for maintaining the pulse of the section.
LISTEN	Always know what is going on around you. Blend with the section's sound. If you are not playing the melody, listen to it and accompany it accurately and sensitively. If you are playing the melody, listen to the accompaniment. Be aware of changes in harmony. Listen to your intonation; tune to those around you. Balance with the ensemble.
WATCH	Be free from the printed page. Keep a watchful eye on the conductor and on your section leader. Be aware of the concertmaster. What part of the bow is being used? What part of the string? How much bow? How much vibrato? Make it your responsibility to determine these things by watching.
SUSTAIN	In most music (unless the piece dictates otherwise), once you commit yourself to a dynamic, it is your responsibility to sustain the intensity and beauty of the sound until its conclusion. (This is one of the most difficult skills for a young orchestra to master - and precisely this skill is what distinguishes some of the greatest orchestras of the world.) Do not expect the section to carry your intensity. You carry the section's intensity!
FEEL	Perhaps the most important tip of all: With help from the conductor and from your own musical and life experience, try to feel the depth and passion of the music with your entire being. Make your instrument express this passion. Give life and humanity to the phrases you play. Sing, through your instrument, the beauty of your soul.

# STUDENT MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

## Conduct

In the spirit of good music making, it is expected that BYSO participants will act responsibly at all times. Rules governing persons on public school property will be in effect at all times for BYSO events, whether or not they are held on school property.

Should a problem arise, the Conductor or Music Director will try to resolve the conflict. In the event that a conflict cannot be properly resolved for the good of the orchestra and the person(s) involved, the Music Director may recommend dismissal to the Board.

Student contracts are signed and in effect for the full year of the orchestra, including during tours, concerts, etc.

## Attendance

Attendance is **mandatory** for all rehearsals, and attendance records will be kept. In cases of unavoidable absence such as illness or other emergencies, please notify the Student Officers and/or the Conductor as far in advance as possible. Students will report absences by email. Email will be announced at first rehearsal and emailed to families.

Students have a responsibility to the orchestra and fellow musicians to be at all rehearsals. Not attending a rehearsal has a negative effect on the orchestra. Illness, family emergency, and the student's school obligations are understandable excuses for missing a rehearsal. Other excuses such as playing engagements (gigs), social events, etc. are not acceptable.

The BYSO mandates that all musicians participate in school orchestral or band music programs or in cases of home schooling, private instrumental lessons. In cases where there is a schedule conflict between a school music commitment and the BYSO, the school commitment takes precedence. This policy pertains only to school musical activities of the student's school district and **does not include sports, extracurricular activities or non-school organizations**. Where an absence is required because of a school or family conflict, the BYSO requires written or verbal notification to the conductor from the musician as soon as possible (preferably at the beginning of the year or semester). Absences should be reported to the correct email address for the student's group as listed above.

**(Constitution of BYSO) Article III Section IX, X and XI**

BYSO experience has demonstrated that more than **FOUR** absences from rehearsal within a concert cycle, whatever the reason, are likely to have a negative impact on both the musician and his or her ensemble. **(Constitution of BYSO) Article III Section VIII**

Consequently, the conductor will review attendance with each orchestra member whose attendance falls below this standard (four absences per concert cycle). Decisions will be made on a case by case basis by the conductor. Actions and remedies may include special juries, directed rehearsals, or in extreme cases, dismissal from the BYSO.

## Punctuality

To respect the performance of the orchestra as a whole and to make maximum use of available rehearsal time, students must be seated and prepared prior to the scheduled rehearsal starting time. Unexcused and excessive tardiness is subject to discipline at the conductor's discretion.

## Music

Orchestra members are responsible for all music issued to them. Music must be returned in good condition at the end of the season. Music may be marked in soft pencil only. Members will be charged for replacement of lost or defaced parts. Members also will be charged for additional music folders that they order.

## Preparation

Orchestra members are expected to MASTER the music PRIOR to rehearsals. The music director will be available before and after rehearsals, or by appointment, if an orchestra member needs help. Members are encouraged and expected to seek help from their private teachers whenever needed. Musical competence must be maintained as determined by the Conductor. Chair assignments may be changed at the discretion of the Conductor. There are no challenges.

## Rehearsal Etiquette

Students are expected to be on task during rehearsals. Off task behaviors include doing homework, reading, fooling around, playing video games, using a cell phone, texting, sleeping, using social media, talking back, disrupting rehearsals, etc. These types of behaviors will not be tolerated and will be monitored, which may result in a warning, contacting of parents, or expulsion if the behavior continues. Electronic devices and cell phones should not be used at all during rehearsal, and must remain in a safe out-of-sight place (such as the student's instrument case, pocket, or bag/purse) so as not to distract anyone during rehearsal.

**Students who are caught using their electronic device during the rehearsal/concert will have their device taken away for the duration of the rehearsal/concert.**

## Announcements

Weekly announcements will be made by the conductors at the beginning of rehearsal or immediately after the break. Board members also may occasionally make an announcement. These announcements are considered to be essential notifications, and orchestra members are responsible for the information conveyed in these announcements, whether or not the student attended the rehearsal. Announcements also may be made via email, depending on the urgency.

## Equipment

Participants are responsible for their own equipment and instruments, except percussionists, who are responsible for their sticks and mallets and equipment set-up. Parents are encouraged to have insurance for valuable instruments, as the BYSO cannot assume responsibility for damage or loss.

## Rehearsal and Performance Facilities

Binghamton High School has graciously allowed the use of their building by the BYSO. It is, therefore, imperative that we treat the building and all of its facilities with the utmost respect. Similarly, space rented for performances also must be respected.

## Website

The Binghamton Youth Symphony Orchestra has a public website that contains information and details regarding the orchestras and its activities. The Binghamton Youth Symphony also has a Facebook page.

Web site: [www.binghamtonyouthsymphony.org](http://www.binghamtonyouthsymphony.org)

## ORCHESTRAL ETIQUETTE AND PERFORMANCE

### Concerts/Dress Code for Concerts

Senior Orchestra members are expected to participate in ALL scheduled concerts and be present at the designated time. Members must adhere to concert dress.

For **MEN**: concert dress shall be black trousers, long sleeved white shirt, black jacket, black shoes and socks. A black bow tie is required.

For **LADIES**: concert dress shall be a conservatively cut black top with either a long (ankle length or longer) skirt or wide-legged trousers, dressy in both fabric and style. Black shoes and black socks or hose are required.

Junior Orchestra members are expected to participate in ALL scheduled concerts and be present at the designated time. Members must adhere to concert dress.

For **MEN**: concert dress shall be black trousers, long sleeved black shirt, long tie (any color), black socks and black shoes.

For **LADIES**: concert dress shall be a conservatively cut black top with either a long (below the knees or longer) skirt or wide-legged trousers, dressy in both fabric and style. Black shoes and black socks or hose are required. A black dress with a black sweater is also acceptable. Leggings are not considered concert dress unless worn under a dress or skirt.

A professional appearance is important. There is a reason symphony orchestras dress in a uniform manner: The *MUSIC* is the purpose of the performance. Nothing should distract the listener from the music itself, and no individual should call attention to him or herself by the manner of his or her dress. The concert is not an opportunity for individuals to display their personal style. You are part of team.



## **Guidelines/General Rehearsal Procedures**

1. Be at rehearsal, warmed up and in your seat at least ten (10) minutes before the "A" is sounded for tuning. It is expected that you will take bad weather, traffic, etc. into account in planning travel time. Always leave enough time to be VERY EARLY for rehearsal. Drive safely!
2. ALWAYS have a #2 or softer black pencil with an eraser on your stand for every rehearsal. If you make extra marks in your music or write in pen, you will be charged for the part. It is suggested that you make a copy of your music when it is assigned and make notations on the copy rather than the original.
3. There will be a twenty (20) minute break during each rehearsal.

## **Tuning**

At the beginning of each rehearsal and each concert, the concertmaster will stand, at which time players should stop warming up and maintain silence. The concertmaster will call for an "A" from the oboe, or from a tuner. After carefully listening to the pitch, the woodwinds will tune, followed by the brass, the lower strings, and the violins. You should always tune so quietly that you can always hear the sounding "A" note. A separate "A" will be given between each group. There should be NO playing once your group has tuned. NOTE: String Orchestra will tune with the concertmaster.

## **Concert Procedure**

ALL musicians stand when the concertmaster stands and remain standing until he/she sits back down. If you are asked to take a solo bow after a concert performance, you should stand without hesitation and remain standing until the entire orchestra has stood and sits down.

## **Music Policy**

1. NO BOWINGS ARE TO BE CHANGED WITHOUT THE PERMISSION OF THE CONDUCTOR. If bowings need to be changed, they can be put in above other bowing.
2. If fingerings and bowings need to be included, write in soft pencil and erase before returning.
3. ALL music MUST BE RETURNED the night of the concert, at the end of the season, or as you are instructed by your conductor.
  - ❖ If you do NOT return the music on the night of the concert, you are responsible for calling Mr. Peters or Ms. Bartlett and mailing the music to his or her home.
4. IF THE MUSIC IS MUTILATED IN ANY WAY, ORCHESTRA MEMBERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR PAYING THE COST OF THE PART. The music is your responsibility.

## **BYSO Auditions**

All auditions for new members require students to email the Audition Coordinator to register and setup an appointment. Auditions are held THREE times a year, in June, September and in January. Auditions take place at Binghamton High School. **Returning orchestra members do NOT have to re-audition to remain members of BYSO**, however you will have to audition for chair position at the beginning of the season. Each year, new and returning BYSO members will have to complete an annual registration form along with the annual membership fee.

The Music Director, conductors, and/or other adjudicator listen to each audition. The audition requirements and other additional information or changes will be made available to students in advance upon registration. The same information also will be available on our website. Orchestra members and their parents are encouraged to help the BYSO recruit new members.

## **BYSO Seating Auditions (Senior Orchestra ONLY)**

In an effort to seat the orchestra in a manner that benefits the entire organization, the BYSO has seating auditions twice a year. Even though the BYSO attempts to make the audition as fair as possible, there are always people who are disappointed or angry because they did not get the seat they expected to get. Conflicts with the seating audition dates should be discussed with the conductor, prior to the audition date. It will be left to the discretion of the conductor to resolve all conflicts and place students accordingly.

Please read and share the following guidelines with your parents and teachers.

The seating is based only on what two judges hear during a five-minute audition. The placement in the orchestra is by no means a true measure of your playing ability. In order for us to do that, we would have to hear you for a more extended time and even that might not give us a true picture. It is merely a “snapshot” of your abilities. Because you sit ahead or behind someone does not necessarily mean that you are better or worse than the other person. It simply means that on the day of the audition, the results came out the way they did. When getting the results of the audition, keep the following things in mind:

1. You have no idea what the other people have done during the auditions compared to you. You may have played well, but others may have played even beyond what you think they are capable of doing on that particular day. By the same token, we sometimes have an elevated opinion of how we play in an audition and yours may not have been as good as you think it was. In contrast, you may have a low opinion of how you performed, but it may have been better than you think.
2. Music is different from many other disciplines in that personal taste comes into play when doing an audition. Your idea of great tone quality or musicality may differ from that of the judge. This is a variable that haunts all musicians in auditions. All you can do is perform the best you can and hope that the judge appreciates what you have done.
3. People have good days and bad days. There are days we can't seem to do anything right and it might be the day of your audition. There are other days when you play beyond your

usual capabilities. This invariably happens to people during the auditions and will have a bearing on the outcome.

4. People handle nerves in different ways. Some do it better than others. They are the people who channel nervous energy in a positive direction. Unfortunately, the adjudicators cannot give you credit for something you did not do, it will be reflected in your seating results. The more auditions you experience, the better you will be at controlling those nerves.
5. You are being judged only on what the judges hear in that five-minute audition. They have no idea of your past experiences with the orchestra, the amount of time you practice, the literature you have covered, the type of instrument you play, etc. What counts in those five minutes is what you produce in that short time. You may indeed be a better musician than others. You need to prove it during the audition.
6. Some people will prioritize their activities. Someone in your section may see this audition as his/her main priority and decide to work more on the orchestra music than solos, etudes, etc. Should you decide to make something other than the orchestra music your priority, it is your option. However, it may have a bearing on the results. In short you may simply have worked less on the audition material than someone else.
7. Membership in your county or all-state ensembles, your age, your position in your school ensemble, the school you attend, the teacher with whom you study, etc. are impossible to factor into seating fairly. Those factors will NOT be used as criteria for seating.

Please understand that we are trying to be as fair as we can to all of the orchestra members by giving them the same opportunities during the audition. Your seating can only be controlled by what you do in those five minutes. We have researched different ways of seating and nothing seems to be fairer than what we are doing right now. This is the same system used in many college and professional orchestra auditions.

Look at the seating as a temporary placement because you will have another audition in the second half of the year.

Preparatory Orchestra members do not participate in seating auditions, and are placed in chairs/sections at the conductor's discretion.

## **Rehearsals**

All rehearsals except dress rehearsals will be held at Binghamton High School unless otherwise announced. If there is a change, you will be notified the week prior during the announcements and it will be posted on the website. If you are absent, it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to check on the change of place.

Binghamton High School is located on corner of Oak and Main Street in Binghamton. ENTER on the Oak Street side of the building through the courtyard entrance.

Senior Orchestra: Sundays 3:00 pm – 5:30  
pm Junior Orchestra: Sundays 3:00 pm –  
5:00 pm

Rehearsals run from September to May, a full calendar of dates can be found on the website.

## **Concert Sites**

### **West Middle School, Binghamton (Site of Winter Concert)**

Take Riverside Drive until you get to Lourdes Hospital. Look for Kneeland Ave (at the traffic light by the hospital). Turn onto Kneeland Ave and stay on this street until you come to West Middle Ave. This intersection can be hard to find and comes up quickly). West Middle School is visible from the intersection. Park in the side lots of the building and enter in the front.

### **Anderson Center for Performing Arts, Vestal (Special Event Site)**

Take the Vestal Parkway to the Binghamton University Campus and turn into the main campus entrance. Follow the signs for the Anderson Center and go around the drive to the right side. Parking can be found along the drive and/or West Gym parking lots.

### **Binghamton High School, Binghamton (Site of Spring Concert)**

Located at Main and Oak Street in downtown Binghamton. Parking is available on the street or in the parking garage behind the school (located on Front Street). Entrance to the school is through the courtyard on Oak Street. Helen Foley Theatre is located on the second floor.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER/SNOW POLICY**

The safety of our students and families is of utmost importance to the Binghamton Youth Symphony. We understand that our students come from all over the area and ask that families use their best judgment when considering traveling to rehearsal based on their specific weather situation.

If schools are closed because of snow and the roads are clear, rehearsal will continue. If the roads are NOT CLEAR, or a state of emergency has been issued, there will be no rehearsal.

Families should ALWAYS check the website and Facebook page to confirm the status of rehearsals when weather could be an issue.

Due to the number of students involved in the Symphony, individual phone calls will not be made should rehearsals be cancelled. Staff will work to the best of their ability to email all families, and post cancellations on the website and Facebook page.

**Thank you for your cooperation and participation in BYSO!**