



**Wichita Falls Youth
Symphony Orchestra**

STUDENT HANDBOOK

WELCOME TO THE 2020-2021 SEASON

INFORMATION FOR MUSICIANS AND FAMILIES

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Section 1:

The Wichita Falls Youth Symphony Orchestra

Mission

The mission of the **Wichita Falls Youth Symphony Orchestra** is to provide music education opportunities that lead to exceptional group performances and a lifelong appreciation of music. **The impact of the WFYSO is that it allows young musicians to collaborate to make music in a full orchestral environment while expanding their musical skills and knowledge.**

History

The Wichita Falls Youth Symphony Orchestra (YSO) was formed in 1992 by Gail Key to fulfill a community need to provide educational experiences for area students, while encouraging performance and an appreciation of classical music. The YSO is an independent 501(c) 3 non-profit organization. The YSO office is located in the Wichita Falls Symphony Orchestra offices at the Kemp Center for the Arts.

Current Orchestra

Today the Youth Symphony Orchestra is made up of elementary, junior high and high school students (strings, percussion, brass and woodwinds) in grades 4-12 (younger students come with teacher recommendations and complete audition requirements). Students represent public, private and home schools all over northern Texas and southern Oklahoma. Membership averages 75 musicians. Auditions for new and returning students take place every season. Within the entire YSO organization there are two main performing groups. The **Symphonic Orchestra** is the flagship ensemble of the organization, performing standard full orchestral repertoire (strings and winds/percussion). **The impact of this group is that it provides the players the opportunity to perform challenging music and to develop leadership skills through principal chair positions and mentoring of younger players.**

The other group is the **Philharmonic Orchestra**, a developmental strings only ensemble performing string arrangements. **The impact of this group is that it builds skills and musical knowledge of all string students through smaller group performances, preparing them for eventual Symphonic Orchestra playing.**

The two groups perform together as the YSO when the opportunity arises and at the Fall Concert and Spring Concert.

Other programs include ensemble groups, student leadership, apprenticeship program, Summer Strings camp, and the Gail Key Academy of Music which provides subsidized Suzuki strings lessons. Currently, we work in collaboration with the WFISD, MSU and the WFSO to offer Suzuki violin lessons in various elementary schools, to provide after school lessons, and to work with school orchestra programs.

Leadership

The Youth Symphony Orchestra is governed by a **Board of Directors**, individuals from the community who volunteer their time to oversee policy, monitor the program and raise money for the YSO. The current Board is as follows:

Dana Taylor, Chair
Lisa Graf, Vice Chair
Adam Roberts, Treasurer
Elizabeth Witherspoon, Secretary
Julie Faulkner
Carlana Faith
Adam Lynskey

Hollie Murphey
Jarret Noll
Dr. Paul San Miguel
Troy Walker
Richard Walp
Dr. Guoying (Grace) Zhang

Staff and Contractors

Dr. Susan Harvey, YSO Music Director & Conductor

Susan Harvey earned a Bachelor of Music from James Madison University, a Master of Arts in Education from Virginia Tech, and a Doctor of Musical Arts from Shenandoah University. Currently she is Associate Professor of Music at Midwestern State University (MSU) in Wichita Falls, Texas.

At MSU Dr. Harvey is Chair of the Music Department and Director of the MSU Summer Kodály Teacher Institute, which offers graduate music education courses. Dr. Harvey also teaches music education courses to general education students and music majors.

Dr. Harvey taught music in Virginia public schools for twenty years. She taught elementary music and instrumental and choral music at the secondary level. Dr. Harvey's ensembles consistently earned superior ratings at festivals. Additionally, her students performed at the Virginia Music Educators Association Conference in Norfolk, Virginia and at the Organization of American Kodály Educators National Conference in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Harvey regularly presents at local, state, and national conferences. Presentation topics have included assessment in music education, intonation in band, practice strategies for instrumentalists, and implementation of Kodály in the instrumental, choral, and elementary classroom. She is an active clinician, guest conductor, judge, and freelance trumpet performer. As a performer, Dr. Harvey was a member of the 2007 National Champion Massanutten Brass Band from Harrisonburg, Virginia and has performed as a member of the Manchester Symphony Orchestra in North Manchester, Indiana.

Dr. Matthew D. Luttrell, Philharmonic Conductor

Dr. Matthew D. Luttrell joined the faculty of Midwestern State University as Director of Bands in Summer 2013. His duties include conducting the Wind Ensemble and Symphonic Band, Marching Band, Applied Lessons, Instrumental Conducting, and other various duties. Dr. Luttrell is a freelance drill writer and trombonist in his spare time.

Prior to Midwestern State University, Dr. Luttrell served as Director of Bands at Adams State University, Associate Director of Bands at the University of Texas Arlington and as Assistant Director of Bands at Illinois State University, where his bands have consistently received invitations to perform outside of campus venues, including NFL season and post-season games. He began his teaching career at Durango High School, located in Durango, CO.

During his doctoral work at Arizona State, Dr. Luttrell served as assistant conductor to Gary Hill and Wayne Bailey in the Chamber Winds, Wind Symphony and Wind Ensemble, as well as an instructor for the Sun Devil Marching Band, including arranging and drill writing.

Dr. Luttrell earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Arizona State University in May 2010, with an emphasis in wind conducting and euphonium performance. He also holds two degrees in music education, from the University of Colorado at Boulder and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Dr. Luttrell serves as both a clinician and adjudicator across the United States, and his professional affiliations include College Band Directors National Association, Texas Music Educators Association, Texas Bandmasters Association, World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles, the National Association for Music Education, and is an honorary member of both the Tau Beta Sigma and Kappa Kappa Psi honorary bands fraternities.

Jean Hall, Executive Director

Jean brings a rich background in non-profit leadership to the Wichita Falls Youth Symphony Orchestra. She began organizing youth educational programs in 2007 for the homeschooling community and then progressed to directing a youth performing arts club for 6 years. While homeschooling her children, she helped develop and run multiple innovative educational summer camps, organized statewide robotics tournaments, managed fundraisers, and built collaborative relationships with multiple non-profit organizations. She later worked part-time with WFISD and with a private company in a teacher capacity. The position at the YSO combines her two core passions of youth education and performing arts. She continues to privately teach writing skills to teenagers and volunteer for local causes. She holds a Bachelor's in English from MSU.

Donna Janecka, Music Librarian

Donna Janecka has been Music Librarian for the YSO since the 2010-2011 season. Donna's responsibilities include cataloging, copying and dispensing sheet music to students. Donna worked as Administrative Assistant for Zundy Junior High School for 18 years with the WFISD before retiring. She earned a BA in Psychology/Sociology from Midwestern University and did graduate work in Archaeology at Eastern New Mexico State University.

Sectional Coaches

Drew Davis, Brass Coach

Anita Marquardt, Cello/Bass Coach

Adam Lynskey, Percussion Coach

Tammy Sparks, Violin Coach

Amanda Hernandez, Violin Coach

Myles Hanford, Woodwinds Coach

Hunter Ricks, Brass Coach

Ethan Rouse, Viola Coach

Barbara Kavanaugh, Cello/Bass/Viola Coach

Background Checks

Consistent with best practices for organizations who work with children, the Executive Director will receive written permission to conduct annual background checks on YSO staff, coaches, Board members and volunteers.

Section 2: The Upcoming Season

Rehearsals and Performances

Rehearsals

Rehearsals take place on Sunday afternoons from 2:00pm-4:00pm at the Midwestern State University Fain Fine Arts Instrumental Music Hall in Wichita Falls, Texas. Additional rehearsals may be scheduled on concert weekends.

Please refer to the season schedule for specific dates. **It is each student's responsibility to know this schedule and come prepared.** Members will be notified by email and/or text in advance if a rehearsal time changes due to inclement weather or other circumstances.

Reporting Time

Musicians should arrive at rehearsals 15 minutes before rehearsal to be seated and ready to begin at 2:00 p.m. A student who arrives at 2:00 p.m. is late.

Concert Weekends

Please reference the season calendar for specific concert dates. Fall and Spring concerts are held at Akin auditorium on the MSU campus and performances with the WFSO are held at Memorial Auditorium. Information regarding dress rehearsals, dress code and other specific details will be communicated at rehearsals as well as through email and/or text.

While at any YSO event:

- Cell phone use is not acceptable (during rehearsal) unless instructed by conductors
- Students should always act in a respectful way towards others
- Students are expected to maintain the cleanliness of their surroundings
- Students are expected to take care of rehearsal space and equipment
- All students are expected to help facilitate set up and tear down of equipment

Students are subject to automatic dismissal for serious infractions, including, but not limited to bullying, vandalism, and other criminal offenses.

Parents shall be responsible for restitution for all damages incurred as a consequence of intentional acts.

We are all here to grow and develop as musicians, but we are also here to enjoy our time together. Your cooperation will help us all make great music. If you have any questions, call the Executive Director.

Ensemble Opportunities

Based on the number of students who desire to play in a small group, ensembles will be formed in the first few weeks of the season. Coaches will schedule group rehearsals outside of weekly orchestra rehearsals. Ensemble members are expected to attend all rehearsals unless prior arrangements are made with the ensemble coach. Ensembles play at many types of events, from

private events to performing before Wichita Falls Symphony Orchestra concerts. Students are representing the YSO by playing at community events and should maintain appropriate conduct at all times. **The impact of this program encourages students to further develop their musical and leadership skills by serving as YSO ambassadors through small group performances at community events.** For more information on any of the ensembles, students should check with their sectional coaches.

Apprentice Program

This program gives up to four high school juniors and seniors of the YSO a chance to benefit from mentoring by a professional will be WFSO music literature. Travel to lessons and rehearsals with the WFSO will be the responsibility of the student/parent. This year, the number and timing of the apprenticeships will be based on the availability of WFSO live concerts.

Summer Strings Camp

The **YSO Summer Strings Camp** happens each summer in July and **gives strings students the opportunity for improving knowledge of theory and performing skills, while participating in varied group ensembles with instructors from outside of Wichita Falls.** It also motivates and encourages them and new students to audition for the YSO for the new season. Camp did not happen in 2020 because of pandemic restrictions, but the hope is to return to it in 2021.

Student Leadership Group

Students have an opportunity to take a leadership role in the YSO by attending meetings as called by a Parent Leader. These students will offer suggestions for social activities, plan community service projects, help on the set up crew, give input to the YSO Board of directors, hear ideas from the Board, and be called upon to serve or lead where needed. Sign up takes place will be announced as this program is being modified for the pandemic conditions.

Section 3: Student Musician Requirements

Attendance

Every player has a responsibility to attend all rehearsals and practice consistently at home.

- Rehearsals are for growing as a group and addressing group musical issues.
Practice is what occurs at home before rehearsal.
- Regular attendance at rehearsals and consistent practice of assigned music at home are crucial if the orchestra is to perform at its very best.
- When students join the Wichita Falls Youth Symphony Orchestra, they make a commitment to their fellow musicians to work together and create a quality orchestra.

Attendance Log

Members **must** sign-in on the attendance log at the beginning of each rehearsal.

Absences, Tardiness and Early Departure

The Wichita Falls Youth Symphony Orchestra is committed to providing superior music education and performance experience to all YSO students. Absences, tardiness or early departure distracts from the student-learning environment, disrupts the individual student's learning process and impacts the performance level of the entire orchestra. Each student musician needs to attend all rehearsals, to arrive promptly, and to remain throughout. Because there are limited rehearsals to prepare excellent music, perfect attendance is the recommended goal.

YSO recognizes, however, that occasional absences may be necessary due to unavoidable situations. Students are given **two absences per semester** without penalty. **If more absences are incurred, the coaching staff will determine whether or not a student will be allowed to perform in a concert.**

This year, absences for sickness or COVID exposure will be given special consideration. Details are included in the COVID policy. All students are asked to avoid group rehearsals when risk factors of exposure and contagion are high.

If students know in advance of absences, they should notify the Executive Director of future conflicts by emailing jhall@wfyouthsymphony.org. If an emergency arises on a weekend, they should text (940) 224-5497.

Fees

Each student of the orchestra must pay tuition of \$150.00 for the season. This can be collected in two installments or paid in full. Checks should be payable to "Wichita Falls Youth Symphony Orchestra." The YSO is able to work with those for whom this fee might be a hardship. The application for financial aid is online at <https://forms.gle/tochgjy58X6fEwrt5>.

This year only: if the season is shut down due to the pandemic, families may request a tuition refund for the portion of the season not completed.

	<u>1st Installment</u>	<u>2nd Installment</u>
2020-2021 Members	9/8/2020	1/12/2021
New Members-Spring only	1/19/2021 (only one installment – fee is \$85.00)	

Audition Information

For the current year, auditions are waived for current students and will only be required for new students or for Philharmonic students wishing to audition for the Symphonic. Auditions will be held twice this season, in August and in January.

All specific audition requirements for each instrument and group will be made available on our website (wfyouthsymphony.org) one month prior to the scheduled audition. An audition application must be submitted by the given deadline. Each student will receive an audition time. Notification regarding acceptance will be given immediately.

If conditions allow, open auditions for both orchestras will be held in May for the following school year. **Student placement will be in effect for the entirety of the season.** Philharmonic students may choose to audition to move up to the Symphonic Orchestra in May/August but not midyear in January.

Students can be an advocate for YSO and promote the organization to their friends at school. The YSO would be happy to contact anyone that students think might be a valuable addition to the group to provide them with more information.

Performance Dress

Members of the **Symphonic Orchestra** are typically fitted in the fall for their YSO formalwear. Formalwear is required for indoor concerts. As the fall 2020 concert will be outdoors, formalwear will not be required.

Section 4: Parent Information

Volunteer Needs

The YSO is comprised of one full-time administrative staff member and a volunteer group who help the organization execute many important details throughout the season. The YSO could NOT exist without volunteer support and that includes the many parents who step up and help in various ways.

Each parent is requested to sign up for at least one activity on the list of volunteer opportunities. Depending on the area in which indicated, parents will be contacted by either the Executive Director or the Parent Liaison to arrange the details.

Volunteer Activities

- Check-in at the beginning of each rehearsal
- Clean up at the end of each rehearsal
- Concert Greeter
- Provide snacks/water for concerts.
- Board membership
- Help sell program ads
- Help plan/run the spring gala
- Other – if a parent has a special expertise or interest in helping with website design, graphic design, photography, video recording, etc, please notify the YSO office to make arrangements.

Other Opportunities to Support the YSO

Program Ads

Each year the YSO produces a professional concert program for both the Fall and Spring concerts. Parents are given the opportunity to purchase a small “text-only” ad for \$15 or “text + student photo” ad for \$30 to offer words of support and encouragement to their child or to the entire orchestra. Advertising forms will be distributed to sign up. The form will also be posted on the website to download from home. Also, if a place of business would like to support YSO, they may purchase an ad at different levels. ¼ page, ½ page or full page ads are available. Contact the Executive Director for more information.

Chair Sponsorships

If a parent, a grandparent or other family member would like to give additionally to the organization, they may do so through sponsoring a child’s “chair.” For \$100, the sponsorship and child’s name will be listed in the program for the concerts.

Texoma Gives

On September 10, the YSO will participate in an online day of giving. Donations may be made online at www.texomagives.org by searching for YSO. Direct links will be posted on social media and the website.

Student Fundraiser

Students will participate in a fundraiser in the spring selling chocolate bars. All students are expected to sell at least one box of chocolate. Incentive prizes will be offered for higher performers. Money raised by the students goes directly to their own orchestra programs.

Spring Gala

In the early spring, the YSO will hold its annual gala and auction. Student soloists will be featured performing for supporters and guests as they enjoy dinner. A live and silent auction will take place that evening. Parents are encouraged to purchase tickets or to donate auction items, as they are able. The gala may be online this year, and if so, alternate plans will be made.

Section 5: Seating Order

Symphonic Orchestra Seating Policy

There is NO Last Chair

Students audition for placement into the orchestra. All students accepted have achieved performance level worthy of being a member. Section leaders, including the concert master, are the only students in strategic placements. Students are not ranked. They are all capable of performing the assigned part. Therefore, THERE IS NO LAST CHAIR.

YSO seating of musicians varies from UIL and standard seating in school ensembles. Once students are assigned a part, seating is based on tone matching.

Tone Matching

Each instrument and bow combination produces tone differences. The goal of an orchestra is to sound like one person on a part. For example, the first violins should sound like one violin, even when eight or more musicians play that part. This is true for all sections where more than one person plays the same part.

During the first few rehearsals, the Director will listen to each section. Students will play several measures with different persons until they are paired with another student whose tone matches their tone. Once pairings are made, students will play in different combinations front to back of the orchestra until the section sounds like one violin.

Tone matching ensures each student can hear him/herself as well as the rest of the ensemble. This is vital for the performance level of the orchestra.

New Bow and/or Violin

When students come to rehearsal with a new bow and/or instrument, they should let the Director know so that tone matching can be redone. Changing equipment changes the tone and blend of the section.

Other Factors Affecting Tone Matching

Other factors that affect tone matching are use/nonuse of vibrato and continued individual study. Students who use little to no vibrato will match with students who use little to no vibrato. A straight tone does not blend with vibrato. As students continue to develop technique (including vibrato), strength, and musicianship, tone matching will change. Tone matching will be redone every semester to ensure students are able to hear themselves within each section. Tone matching will occur as needed, possibly more than once a semester.

Philharmonic Orchestra Seating Policy

Chair placements will be determined by audition results, by coaches/conductor, and by periodic chair placement testing.

Section 6: Other Information

Photography

Please be aware that from time to time photographs/videos will be taken of the Youth Symphony Orchestra, which may, at the Executive Director's discretion, be used for publicity in print media and on the internet. Photo release form (on the medical emergency form) should be submitted with the first payment for the YSO season.

Professional Concerts

Observation of a professional orchestra is valuable for developing student musicians. The YSO is very fortunate to have an excellent Symphony Orchestra in our city. Members of the Youth Symphony Orchestra are strongly encouraged to attend concerts of the Wichita Falls Symphony Orchestra. The WFSO is offering YSO families discounted tickets to all season concerts for \$10.00 each (with student ID).

Members of the student ensemble who play prior to the WFSO concert or all YSO members playing during the WFSO concert will be provided a complimentary ticket.

Families must purchase the discounted tickets by the Friday prior to the concert by coming to the WFSO office in person or by calling (940) 723-6202 and paying by credit card.

Communications

Most of the communication between the office and YSO students will be by **email and text**. Families are encouraged to check email frequently for information. The **website** (www.wfyouthsymphony.org) includes a **student page** with downloadable documents and rehearsal schedules. It is the student's responsibility to read all information pertaining to rehearsals, concerts, and fundraisers. If someone is unable to receive email communication, please notify the Executive Director to make alternative arrangements.

Communication by text will use the Remind app. Families will be provided with a class code to sign up for these texts, or added by the staff.

YSO is on **Facebook, Twitter, Instagram** and **YouTube**. Please "like" and "follow" the Wichita Falls Youth Symphony Orchestra. The organization posts pertinent information on Facebook about auditions, ensembles, concerts, and other items of interest so that everyone can easily keep tabs on our whereabouts.

Gail Key Scholarship for Music Excellence

For seniors in the YSO who plan to attend college after graduation, the Board has established a Scholarship named after the founder of YSO. This award will go to a high school senior who fills out the application which is then reviewed by the Scholarship Committee. One senior is chosen for the \$1,000 award which is presented at the spring concert.

Alumni of YSO

The YSO loves to see alumni return to visit. They may be recognized at special events and are encouraged to stay in touch. Alumni are sometimes hired as sectional coaches and invited to serve on the board of directors. Any alumni interested in these options may contact the office.

Private Teachers

The YSO keeps contact information for area providers of private music lessons. Anyone seeking a private instructor may ask for recommendations.

Music Stores

- F&J Music, for music, accessories and repair, Wichita Falls, TX www.fjmusik.com
- Sam Gibbs, for rental and repair, Wichita Falls, TX www.samgibbs.com
- Luthier Shop, for rental, restoration and repair of string instruments and bows, Aubrey, TX www.luthiershop.com
- Young Musicians, Inc. <http://www.young-musicians.com/> Violin, viola, cello, bass with music and accessories for piano, harp, flute, recorder, organ, guitar

Section 7: COVID Innovations

Rehearsals

- Rehearsals will be held at The Forum (2120 Speedway). This decision was made to locate in larger rooms than are available at MSU so that students can be spaced out safely.
- All students must enter through the front door where volunteers will scan temperatures, provide hand sanitizer, and check that everyone is wearing a mask. Parents, please do not leave the premises until your student has been admitted to the rehearsal.
- Students will have a specific place to leave instrument cases so we can control traffic and eliminate kids bunching up.
- Strings students will be seated 6 feet apart. Wind students will be spaced further, according to the needs of each instrument.
- Staff and students will wear masks at all possible times during rehearsal.
- Wind players will be issued one split mask and bell covers. Additional masks/bell covers may be purchased if desired.
- Students will bring their own music stands to avoid cross contamination. A fund is available to assist students with this purchase if needed. Contact the YSO office to request this.
- When rehearsals are over, we will file out, minimizing chances for cross contamination).

Scheduling

- Rehearsal times will be staggered so that Philharmonic and Symphonic students will not all be arriving at the same time.
- The fall season will begin Aug 23 and run straight through with weekly rehearsals (no Labor Day break) until the fall concert.
- Following the fall concert, we will break until the spring season. During this time, we can evaluate how the plan went, listen to your feedback, and adapt as needed for the spring.

Volunteers

- Parent volunteers will be needed at every rehearsal. This means **all of you** need to be involved in a real way.
- Each week, volunteers will be needed to set up for rehearsals, to man the check-in tables with thermometers and hand sanitizer, and to help clean up afterwards.

Performances

- For maximum safety and audience spacing, our fall concert is being planned outdoors. November 1 is our current date. Circle that on the calendar and more details will be shared as soon as they're confirmed.
- Seriously, the outdoor concert will be cool. It opens up fun new possibilities.

Student fees/Refunds

- Student fees have been frozen and will remain the same as last year. \$150 for the year.
- Understanding that many families are facing financial hardships, scholarships are available. You will NOT be turned away for inability to pay the fees.
- If the season is halted and the YSO is paused for the pandemic, student fees will be refunded based on the amount of the season left unplayed.

Flexibility

- We will continue to monitor all current research as it becomes available and use all available strategies for keeping you safe.
- We will communicate with you if changes are needed due to evolving circumstances.
- If changes are needed (for rehearsal location, structure, or anything else), we will adapt and keep improving.

Waiver

- All students must sign the COVID form and release to acknowledge their acceptance of health and safety standards and the risk involved in group activities. This form is available online <https://forms.gle/6TSDtdbdSFRPqFSr7>