



UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
Youth Symphony Orchestra

Student & Family Handbook

(updated 7/9/23)

Mission:

The mission of the University of New Hampshire Youth Symphony Orchestra is to provide orchestral experiences of the highest possible caliber to string students in the seacoast region of New Hampshire, southern Maine, and northeastern Massachusetts. By providing quality musical instruction and high standards of rigor, the UNH-YSO seeks to help students develop in their technical capabilities and musical understanding.

Program Description:

Students are selected for participation in the UNH-YSO via an audition process, designed to ensure that students possess the abilities necessary to be successful in the program. UNH-YSO students will receive weekly instruction in the form of orchestral rehearsals led by UNH faculty members, and sectional rehearsals led by UNH music education students and local professional musicians. Every reasonable effort will be made to appropriately challenge students of varying ability levels. A free, public concert will be given at the end of each semester.

Eligibility:

Age: String players in grades 4 through grade 12 (and home-schooled students of the equivalent ages) are eligible to audition for the UNH-YSO. Exceptionally advanced musicians of younger age may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Woodwinds, brass and percussion students are not included at the present time, but may be added to the ensemble in future years.

Ongoing Instruction: Students are expected to be pursuing individual or group instruction on their string instrument while participating in the UNH-YSO. Private lesson instruction fulfills this expectation, as does participating in a “qualified string program” at school. A “qualified string program” must meet at least twice a week and does not mix string players with other instruments in a “catch-all” ensemble.

School Orchestra Participation Policy:

One of the fundamental reasons for the founding of the UNH-YSO is to support string education in the region. The UNH-YSO seeks to support all school string programs that currently exist and to encourage the creation of more. The UNH-YSO is not an alternative to instruction in public or private school program; it is a supplement. *It is therefore required of all UNH-YSO members that they participate in their school’s orchestra program, if such a program exists.* If the school’s offering for string students does not meet the definition of a “qualified string program” given above, students are not required to participate in that program.

Tuition and Refund Policy:

Cost: Tuition for UNH Youth Symphony program is \$125 per student, per semester. Tuition payments will be submitted through UNH Youth Programs website. Dr. Upham will email to families the link for registration and payment of tuition following the completion of a successful audition. Tuition is due within two weeks of receiving that email.

Refunds: Payment of tuition represents the student's acceptance of their placement in the UNH-YSO, and the student and their family's commitment to participate and faithfully attend rehearsals and performances. Once this commitment is made via the payment of tuition, *no refund of tuition will be made for reasons of student withdrawal from the program*. A partial refund may be given if the program is cancelled by UNH. Please read this entire student handbook to be familiar with all policies and expectations before accepting your placement and paying tuition.

Auditions:

Scheduling: Auditions for the upcoming school year are typically held on the last Sunday of August, beginning as early as 5:00 pm, in the Paul Creative Arts Center on the UNH campus in Durham. The website will be updated with the exact audition date and will provide a link to the online registration form. In mid- to late-August, families will be emailed a specific audition time for their student's audition.

After those initial auditions have occurred, students interested in auditioning for the UNH-YSO may still schedule an audition by emailing David.Upham@unh.edu. Auditions may be scheduled at any point during the school year, although students may be asked to wait until the following semester to begin their participation, if insufficient time remains between the audition and the upcoming performance.

Audition Fees: There are no fees associated with auditioning for the UNH-YSO.

Audition Requirements: The following are the audition requirements for joining the UNH-YSO. Please be prepared to do all of the following. When selecting your own material (i.e., the scales and solo excerpts), please choose things that show your best, current abilities. Please understand this is likely *not* something you are currently working on, but something you've recently completed and "polished."

- **Scales:** Prepare one major and one melodic minor scale of your choosing. Intermediate bass students will be asked to perform a chromatic scale from the open E string up to the B in first position on the G string.
- **Solo:** Please prepare a solo excerpt that will demonstrate your abilities.
 - Intermediate players: Please prepare a 1-2 minutes of solo material.
 - Advanced players: Please prepare 2-3 minutes of solo material, being sure to display a variety of styles and techniques.
- **Sight-Reading:** In the audition, each student will be presented with a passage of music to sight-read which matches the student's current playing level. Please be prepared to sight-read a passage while paying close attention to proper pitches, rhythms, bowings, and other items printed on the page.

Attendance Policies:

Attendance at all scheduled rehearsals and performances is a requirement of membership in the UNH-YSO. Students who miss too many rehearsals or who are consistently tardy to rehearsals will be asked to leave the program, without refund of tuition paid.

As a general practice, we ask that anyone exhibiting symptoms of any illness not come to rehearsal.

Absences: Absences from rehearsals are either “excused” or “unexcused.”

Excused Absences: Students may have up to 2 excused absences per semester and still perform in the concert. After a 3rd excused absence, participation in the concert is solely at the discretion of the conductor. In order to be considered an excused absence, the absence must be both:

- ***Reasonably unavoidable*** (significant illness, emergency, schedule conflict where there is no reasonable choice or alternative, etc.), and...
- ***Communicated in advance*** of the effected rehearsal to Dr. Upham.

Please note that failing to communicate with Dr. Upham in a timely manner may result in the absence being considered unexcused. You may contact Dr. Upham via his email (David.Upham@unh.edu). Please state the specific reason for the absence. Dr. Upham will then determine if the absences is excused.

Unexcused Absence: All other absences will be considered unexcused. A single unexcused absence from a rehearsal or performance may result in a student’s removal from a concert performance or the overall program.

Tardiness: Rehearsals will begin promptly at the scheduled time. Students are expected to be in their seats 5 minutes before the scheduled start of rehearsal, with instruments, music, and all necessary equipment. A tardy arrival to rehearsal is defined as a failure to be seated and ready to go when the tuning note is given. A tardy arrival to rehearsal will be considered equivalent to half of an excused absence. *Arriving more than 10 minutes after the rehearsal begins will be considered equivalent to a full excused absence.*

Weather Emergencies:

Rehearsal: Rehearsals may be cancelled due to weather emergencies. If such a cancellation is necessary, Dr. Upham will notify families via email no later than one hour before the scheduled rehearsal. Due to a variety of reasons, cancelled rehearsals cannot be rescheduled.

Performances: In the event that a performance is jeopardized by inclement weather, Dr. Upham will contact families via email well in advance of the performance. If a “snow date” is published in the UNH-YSO’s semester schedule, please hold this date open in your family schedule as well.

Seating and Soloist Selection Policies:

Seating: Seat assignments within each string section (i.e. “seating”) will be determined by the UNH-YSO coaches and conductor in a non-competitive process. The focus will be upon building the strongest possible section rather than upon “ranking” players. Every musician has areas of strength and weakness, and players will be paired on stands so that they can aid and reinforce each other, and arranged from “back” to “front” in a manner that creates the strongest possible section. Additionally, every attempt will be made to rotate part assignments so that all violinists have an opportunity to play 1st and 2nd violin parts at some point during the school year, when appropriate.

Selection of Soloists: When solos are present in the repertoire, soloists may be appointed by the conductor or selected by the UNH-YSO coaches via an audition. If an audition is held, all students in the section with the solo will have the opportunity to audition, but audition for a solo does not guarantee a student will be selected to perform a solo. The timing and process for auditions will be announced by the conductor, who will also be responsible for communicating the results of the auditions to the students.

Additionally, when there are multiple solos passages within a single piece, or solos in multiple pieces, it is expected that students interested in solos will prepare *all the solos present in the repertoire*. In other words, students will not be able to direct which solos they may perform by preparing one spot or piece over another.

This requirement is necessary because if solos were only assigned according to who has auditioned for a particular spot, some solos may go uncovered if no one auditions for them. The reality is that a student may therefore have to play a solo they haven’t auditioned for, making it better to prepare all passages in advance.

Exceptions to this policy may be made by the conductor in the case of exceptionally long or challenging solos.

Student Accountability (“Part Checks”):

In order to help ensure that all students are prepared to the fullest extent of their abilities, UNH-YSO coaches will perform brief “part checks” just before the final rehearsals and performances. During a “part check”, students will be excused from full rehearsal, one at a time, to go to a private location with the UNH-YSO coach. Brief passages of the music will be selected at random for the student to play.

The date for “part checks” will be announced by the conductor, and will always occur *after* seating has been determined. In this way, “part checks” will not be misunderstood as a competitive audition or as a method of ranking players.

Schedule of Rehearsals and Performances:

Please see the youth symphony website for a summary of this year’s schedule. Detailed schedules for each orchestra will be emailed to families when a student enrolls in the program.

Location & Driving Directions:

Location: All rehearsals and performances are held at the Paul Creative Arts Center (PCAC) on the campus of the University of New Hampshire in Durham. The PCAC is located at *30 Academic Way, Durham, NH 03824*.

Driving Directions:

FROM THE WEST: Take Route 4 East to Durham and take the Exit 155A. Turn right at the end of the ramp. Travel past Thompson Hall, the Memorial Union Building (MUB), and the bus stop and bear right onto Mill Road. Take the next right on Academic Way. You will pass Parking Lot B on your left. Paul Creative Arts Center is on the right, just past the food carts.

FROM THE EAST: Take Route 4 West to Durham and take the Exit 155A. Turn left at the end of the ramp. Travel past Thompson Hall, the Memorial Union Building (MUB), and the bus stop and bear right onto Mill Road. Take the next right on Academic Way. You will pass Parking Lot B on your left. Paul Creative Arts Center is on the right, just past the food carts.

Parking: As rehearsals and performances are on Sundays, parking is not a problem on campus. Street parking is free on Sundays, and "Lot B" is available for public usage, free of charge.

Concert Attire:

The following concert attire is required of all UNH-YSO members. Students not dressed in the following manner for performances may be asked to not perform. Requirements are not gendered/gender-specific and are best described as simply:

"White Tops, Black Bottoms"

Specifics:

- Plain, white dress shirt/blouse. Please no T-shirts, sweaters, etc.
 - o No writing or large insignias, please.
 - o To keep it simple and consistent, please no ties or bow ties.
- Black dress pants or skirt. No black jeans, please.
 - o If wearing a skirt, please be sure it is mid-calf length or longer, or that black tights are worn.
- Black dress shoes. Please no tennis shoes, sandals, etc.
 - o If wearing socks, please wear black dress socks.

Behavior and Rehearsal Expectations:

The following are the behaviors expected of all UNH-YSO students and family members:

1. Consider yourself to be a representative of the UNH Youth Symphony Orchestra at all times when you are on campus. Show respectful behavior at all times, to all individuals, including the UNH faculty, UNH students, fellow orchestra members & their families, and your own family members.
2. Be respectful towards all aspects of the UNH Music Department facilities. The UNH-YSO is granted use of all the facilities and equipment *free of charge*. Please actively work to protect all aspects of the UNH music building.
3. Arrive on time for all scheduled rehearsals and performances.
4. Wear attire appropriate to rehearsals and concerts. Although family schedules may require some accommodations, please try to arrive dressed in a manner that is conducive to an effective rehearsal process.
5. Be sure to have your instrument, music and all necessary equipment at all UNH-YSO events.
6. *Be musically prepared for sectionals and rehearsals to the best of your ability!* Group rehearsals are meant to work on things that cannot be done individually, like tuning with others, working on balances and other things not written on the page. They are not for “personal practice time”. Arrive at rehearsal able to perform the correct pitches, rhythms, dynamics, and printed bowings for that week’s assignment, as given by the conductor.

About the Conductor:

Dr. David Upham is the Director of Orchestral Activities at the University of New Hampshire, and serves as the Music Director and Conductor for the Great Bay Philharmonic Orchestra, a professional orchestra based in Portsmouth, NH. Prior to his arrival in New Hampshire, he was active in the Pacific Northwest as a conductor of professional, community, and student ensembles. Dr. Upham was the Music Director of the Bainbridge Symphony Orchestra, director of the Young Virtuosi Chamber Orchestra at the Seattle Conservatory of Music, and Associate Conductor of the Rainier Symphony Orchestra. He also conducted various professional ballet orchestras and the Northwest Mahler Festival orchestra. In November of 2009, he made his international debut at the French music festival, *Aujourd’hui Musiques*.

Dr. Upham frequently appears as a conductor and clinician in educational settings at festivals across the country. He serves as the orchestra conductor at the Summer Youth Music School at UNH, and was faculty at the Lutheran Summer Music Academy and Festival in the Midwest. He had a long tenure with the Seattle Youth Symphony Orchestras, conducting each of the organization’s five orchestras, and led the 2012 New Hampshire All-State Orchestra. A strong supporter of music in the public schools, Dr. Upham had a successful 10-year career as a public-school music

educator, leading elementary, middle school, and high school orchestral programs in both Kent and Bellevue, WA.