



For Immediate Release:

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Sarasota Youth Orchestras Celebrate 60 Years of Service to Local Youth
Alumni Concert Performance Scheduled for December 21

Sarasota, Fla. – September 16, 2019 – For 60 years, Sarasota Orchestra has sponsored a Youth Orchestra Program (YOP) currently consisting of eight orchestras, comprised of five string orchestras, one wind band and two full orchestras. To commemorate this milestone, Sarasota Youth Orchestras will present an alumni reunion concert on Saturday, December 21. The alumni concert gives returning students an opportunity to mentor current students and reunite with friends and family.

More than 10,000 students have been through the Youth Orchestra program since 1959 and have performed or are currently performing with major orchestras across the country, including Sarasota Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, Colorado Symphony, Houston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the New World Symphony. Graduates credit YOP for their appreciation of music.

“I have made some of the best friends I have ever had through SYO. My experience with SYO shaped me into a responsible, driven adult,” alumnus Deaven Palm, Marketing and Groups Director for Great Falls Voyagers, says. “I adore the orchestra and appreciate any chance I get to be involved.”

The Youth Orchestras meet once a week from September through April and present five concerts that are free to the public. Over 300 students are currently enrolled in the program. To ensure all students have access to music instruction and education programs, Sarasota Orchestra awards around \$75,000 a year in scholarships for YOP students to participate in SYO, Summer Music Camps, private lessons, and study music in college. The percentage of students who receive YOP tuition scholarships has grown to 60 percent. Students in need also have the opportunity to borrow instruments from the orchestra.

Due to space constraints, YOP is not able to expand its programs to meet the needs of the community.

“We are completely out of space at the Beatrice Friedman Symphony Center, and we physically cannot invite more kids into parts of the program,” Director of Education Alyson Rozier says. “As we celebrate the Youth Orchestras’ 60-year evolution, we imagine having a building that allows education programs to run potentially seven days a week and classes and activities that our community so desperately wants for us to offer.”

Other programs include the Young Person's Concerts, which engage nearly 9,000 fourth and fifth graders from Sarasota and Manatee schools annually, many of whom gain their first exposure to a professional orchestra. This begins with an in-school preparation curriculum guide and culminates in a concert held at a professional venue by Sarasota Orchestra. Each school is provided a detailed curriculum packet to help prepare students for the concert. This packet, written by local teachers and the Education Department, continually receives praise from the state as a benchmark for music curriculum. The packet contains 60 to 100 pages of lessons that meet state and national standards, and supplemental materials to help teachers prepare students.

Every August, the Sarasota Orchestra Education Department offers in-service training sessions for all local teachers. These sessions include an overview of the concert and detailed explanations of the materials. These sessions are recorded and available for teachers to use throughout the year as they prepare their students for the concert. Other outreach programs include Orchestra musicians performing and coaching in the schools and other community venues.

Each July, the Orchestra presents a Summer Music Camp (SMC) that concludes with a concert for parents and the public to attend. Established in 1977, SMC currently offers two weeks of full-day instruction totaling 70 hours of intensive music education. Students with no prior experience on an instrument can participate, creating an entry point into SYO as well as school ensembles. Auditions are not required for participation. In addition to training on string orchestra and band instruments, all students participate in music theory and elective classes including Music Appreciation, Music History, Sight Singing, Ear Training, World Drumming, Jazz Ensemble, and Full Orchestra. Faculty include Sarasota Orchestra musicians and highly respected music educators from the local school system. Support from local donors and grants keep tuition at a fraction of the actual cost. In 2019, 54% of students attended Summer Music Camp on need-based scholarships.

An SYO student who goes through the entire program has played approximately 130 pieces of music and spends an average of 7 to 14 hours a week practicing.

SYO's notable impact includes:

- ten SYO alumni who have returned as conductors of a Youth Orchestra ensemble
- a Grammy Award winner
- a Youth Philharmonic Carnegie Hall debut in 2008
- approximately 30% of SYO graduates pursuing careers in music or the arts.
- students who are currently attending or have attended some of the top universities in the country, including:
 - Yale University
 - Harvard University
 - New England Conservatory
 - The Juilliard School
 - Eastman School of Music
 - Brown University
 - Columbia University
 - Rice University
 - Florida State University
 - University of Florida
 - University of Michigan
 - University of North Texas

About Sarasota Orchestra:

For more than 70 years, Sarasota Orchestra has been engaging music lovers from around the region and visitors from around the world. The Orchestra performs more than 130 classical, Pops, educational, and community engagement concerts each year and thrives as the oldest continuing orchestra in the state of Florida. Youth programs provide concert experiences for about 9,000 students per year and includes an extensive Youth Orchestra Program of eight ensembles and 350 students. The Sarasota Music Festival is a world-renowned performance and teaching festival that attracts young musicians and faculty from across the globe each June.

Images attached:

- Additional photos can be found on Sarasota Orchestra's website:
<https://www.sarasotaorchestra.org/download>.

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