



2025-2026

Musician Handbook

**Vermont Youth Orchestra Association
Elley-Long Music Center at St. Michael's College
223 Ethan Allen Ave, Colchester, VT 05446
802-655-5030 www.vyo.org**

*Revised August, 2025
Amendments/Updates will be provided when made*

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Welcome to the Vermont Youth Orchestra Association!

The VYOA is a community that transforms young people's lives through music by fostering a culture where musicians realize their artistic potential, form lifelong friendships, and strive for musical excellence.

In each of our ensembles, our students grow as musicians through professionally-led training in rehearsals, coaching sessions, and performances from many of the finest music educators in the region. The musical and non-musical activities of each ensemble offer students the opportunity to develop team building and leadership skills.

Our students benefit greatly from being a part of the VYOA. Performances by our ensembles are highly valued in our community and have been enjoyed throughout the world. As our region's largest youth orchestra program, we serve not only our students but also contribute to the cultural and educational vitality of our community and serve as a catalyst for initiatives and partnerships that increase the reach and depth of arts education in our region.

The purpose of this handbook is to outline our programs, policies, expectations, and offerings. The success of our programs demands a high level of commitment from each student and their parents or guardians. Please reference this handbook to answer any questions you might have throughout the season.

VYOA Programs.....	4	Complimentary VYO concert tickets.....	14
Scope of program offerings.....	4	Concert recordings	14
Instrumental ensembles	4	Parental support	15
Additional Programs	7	Recommended equipment/supplies for students	16
Summer programs	7	Communicating with the VYOA	16
VYOA Member Expectations and Policies	8	Weather conditions.....	17
Commitment to Musical Excellence	8	Parking at the Elley-Long Music Center at Saint	
Attendance and Lateness Policy.....	9	Michael's College	17
School Music Program Participation Policy	9	Music festival sponsorships.....	18
Ensemble Folder and Sheet Music Responsibilities	9	Lost and found	18
Musician Behavior Expectations	10	Instrument Loans	18
Bullying and Harassment Policy	11	Annual Placement Auditions	19
Disciplinary Process	11	VYOA Senior Soloist Auditions	19
Concert Attire	12	Ensemble placements	20
Additional information for VYOA families	14	Orchestra seating and part assignment policies	21
Tuition	14	VYOA Scholarships and Awards.....	22
VYOA Financial Aid Program	14		
Concert admission	14		

VYOA Programs

Scope of program offerings

The VYOA offers instrumental ensemble programs for musicians who play the following instruments: Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, French Horn, Trumpet, Trombone, Tuba, Percussion, Harp, Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass, and occasionally piano. Additionally, some of our training programs also include musicians that play the following instruments: Alto Saxophone, Tenor Saxophone, Baritone Saxophone, Electric Bass, Baritone Horn, Euphonium, Guitar, and Keyboard.

Below is a brief description of each group. For more detailed information and a complete look at each ensemble's rehearsal schedule please visit our website at www.vyo.org.

Instrumental ensembles

Vermont Youth Orchestra

Dr. Mark Alpizar, conductor ~ Art DeQuasie, manager

Rehearsal: Sundays, 12:15 – 3:15 PM at the Elley-Long Music Center (Aug-May)

Established in 1963, the Vermont Youth Orchestra (VYO) draws its members from Vermont, New York, and New Hampshire. As our most advanced orchestra, the VYO performs familiar orchestral masterworks, interesting lesser-known works, works of popular styles, and music written by outstanding contemporary composers. The VYO presents three major concerts each year in addition to OrchestraPalooza and community concerts. Its members master a significant amount of music each season in fast-paced and focused rehearsals.

The VYO begins its season with a three-day camp that takes place at the Elley-Long Music Center in early August. The musicians use this camp as a kick-off to the season, both musically and socially. While the rehearsal schedule is intense, all staff work together to create fun non-musical activities that everyone participates in. VYO musicians are expected to attend as it serves a vital role in launching the season. Missing VYO camp counts as one absence for the fall concert cycle. Missing one day of VYO camp counts as a half-absence. There is an optional fourth day of camp called "Ensembles day" which serves as the kick-off of the VYO String Squad and Winds, Brass, and Percussion Ensemble, which are groups that perform out in the community throughout the season.

Musicians are invited to join VYO based on their placement auditions, where they must display a high level of proficiency on their instrument, mature tone production, and strong musicianship skills. VYO members are primarily in grades 9 through 12, joined by a small complement of accomplished middle school musicians. Please see the "Auditions, placements, role assignments, and awards" section of the handbook for more information.

VYO International Tours: The VYO has a proud tradition of touring internationally on a regular basis, with a goal of touring every third year. Previous tours have taken our musicians to Russia, China, France, Germany, Czech Republic, Iceland, Spain, Portugal, and Greece.

Vermont Youth Philharmonia

Dr. Yutaka Kono, conductor ~ Art DeQuasie, manager

Rehearsal: Sundays, 3:45 – 6:15 PM at the Elley-Long Music Center (Aug-April)

Vermont Youth Philharmonia (VYP), our intermediate orchestra, performs three major performances during the concert season including OrchestraPalooza at the Flynn Center. VYP is also featured in annual school tour performances. VYP performs a variety of professional and educational repertoire, including mainstream orchestral pieces, contemporary music, and lighter fare such as film music. For many members, VYP offers them their first experiences playing in a full symphony orchestra and provides the ensemble training that prepares them to advance to the VYO.

VYP musicians begin their season with a two-day camp that takes place at the Elley-Long Music Center in early August. Musicians use this camp as a kick-off to the season, both musically and socially. Rehearsals are intense and focused but all staff work together to come up with fun non-musical activities that everyone participates in. VYP musicians are expected to attend camp, as it serves a vital role in preparing for the fall concert. Missing both days is counted as one absence for the fall concert cycle; missing one day is counted as a half absence.

VYP membership is offered based on musician auditions. It is common for musicians to spend two to four years in VYP prior to earning advancement to VYO. Most VYP members are in grades 7 to 10, with an overall spread of membership from grades 5 through 12. Please see the “Auditions, placements, role assignments, and awards” section of the handbook for more information.

VYP members entering 9th-12th grade are invited to join the VYO international tours on a limited basis.

Vermont Youth Strings

Asiat “Ace” Ali, conductor ~ Myriam Bouti, manager

Rehearsal: Sundays, 3:30 PM – 5:45 PM at the Elley-Long Music Center (Aug-April)

Vermont Youth Strings (VYS) provides ensemble experience for string players, with an emphasis on developing ensemble skills that cannot be learned in private instruction alone, preparing members for the full orchestra experience offered in VYP. VYS performs two concerts annually including OrchestraPalooza at the Flynn Center and school tours in the spring. VYS performs arrangements of classic and traditional repertoire and original compositions written for younger ensembles.

VYS begins its season with a two-day camp at the Elley-Long Music Center in August. Camp runs 9am to 3pm both days and serves as a kick-off to the VYS season. Camp includes rehearsal time as well as recreational activities that helps everyone to get to know each other. All VYS musicians are expected to attend this camp. Missing both days is counted as one absence; missing one day is counted as a half absence.

An audition is required for placement into VYS. On average, musicians spend two to four years in VYS prior to earning advancement to VYP. Please see the “Auditions, placements, role assignments, and awards” section of the handbook for more information.

Presto

Kathleen Kono, conductor ~ Myriam Bouti, manager

Rehearsal: Sundays, 1:30 PM – 2:30 PM at the Elley-Long Music Center (Seven-week sessions in the fall and spring)

Presto provides beginning string players with an introductory ensemble experience. Through their involvement in Presto, students improve their listening skills and learn how to play independent parts, work in a section, and follow a conductor. Students interested in Presto should have at least one year of experience in weekly private

lessons or weekly school orchestra class and be able to recognize notes on the A and D strings. Musicians typically participate in two to four Presto sessions in preparation for membership in VYS.

No audition is required for admission to Presto, though it is useful to check with a musician's private or school string teacher to determine if the musician is ready to join.

Da Capo

Ally Tarwater, conductor ~ Art DeQuasie, manager

Rehearsal: Sundays, 12:30pm – 2:30pm at the Elley-Long Music Center (Sessions in the fall and spring)

Da Capo offers intermediate woodwind & brass players an ensemble enrichment opportunity in a fun & encouraging environment. Sessions are 7 weeks long and meet in the fall and spring. During each session, musicians will prepare concert repertoire specific to winds and brass. Da Capo is intended for musicians in grades 6 – 9 who have at least 1 year of experience on their instrument.

VYOA Jazz

Kyle Saulnier, director ~ Juliette Chant, manager

Rehearsal: Saturdays, 10am–1pm at the Elley-Long Music Center (Sessions fall and spring)

VYOA offers a jazz program for our state's finest young jazz musicians by audition in December and May. This program is open to students grades 5-12 and is open to instrumentalists of the traditional big-band variety (2 Alto, 2 Tenor, 1 Baritone Sax. 4 Trumpet. 4 Trombone. 2 Drumset, 2 Guitar, 2 Keyboard, 2 Bass) on a first-come is first-served basis. As of January 2026 placement is by audition only.

VYOA Grooves

David Kerr, director ~ Juliette Chant, manager

Rehearsal: Mondays, 6pm–8pm at the Elley-Long Music Center (Sessions fall and spring)

Grooves is an un auditioned jazz ensemble open to musicians in grades 5-12 with one year of experience on their instruments. This ensemble gives young musicians the opportunity to build skills playing in big band and combo settings in a safe, level-appropriate environment. Grooves is open to winds, brass, and rhythm section instruments of the big band.

Additional Programs

Lesson Program

Launched in 2018, the Vermont Youth Orchestra Association offers an instrumental lesson program for students interested in learning to play the violin, viola, cello, double bass, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, French horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba, and percussion. Through studying with an experienced teacher, students will improve their technique, learn important repertoire, and gain valuable performance experience. Lessons take place at the Elley-Long Music Center. Additional string lessons are offered at the satellite in St. Albans, and percussion lessons are offered at the satellite studio in Essex. Please visit www.vyo.org or email Myriam Bouti, myriam@vyo.org, for more information. Financial aid is available to all qualifying families.

Early Childhood Programs

Please visit www.vyo.org to learn more about our Music Together® and Rug Concerts for children 5 and under.

Summer programs

Summer Symphony Camp

(4th week of June)

Summer Symphony Camp is a great way to introduce young musicians to symphony and jazz orchestra. This week-long program is designed to provide a fun and supportive environment for exploring these new avenues of ensemble playing. All students will participate in both orchestras, performing a wide range of musical styles and giving them an opportunity to experiment with different musical genres. Campers make new friends while playing great music and participating in other fun electives. Camp is held at the Elley-Long Music Center during the final week of June.

VYOA Member Expectations and Policies

This section explains the expectations of VYOA musicians and policies that ensure a safe learning environment and make it possible for our ensembles to perform at an exceptional level.

Commitment to Musical Excellence

As a member of the VYOA, your personal progress and success as a musician and the collective progress and success of your ensemble depend upon your **FULL** participation. By joining a VYOA ensemble, you make a commitment not only to yourself but also to each of your fellow musicians to do the following:

Participate in rehearsals regularly (in accordance with the attendance policy for your ensemble). The challenging music and intensity of work in our ensemble rehearsals means that each minute of rehearsal time is valuable and important. A missed rehearsal is the equivalent of missing a school class for the entire week! We follow the professional rehearsal standard with members expected to remain in place during rehearsals until dismissal at the break and at rehearsal end.

Sectional coaching rehearsals are of particular importance; please make every effort to attend them and bring as much focus and attention to them as you do to full rehearsals.

Practice your ensemble music on a regular basis between rehearsals and achieve mastery of it well before the concert. The primary purpose of rehearsals is for musicians to grow together as an ensemble and to develop a clear, consistent, and cohesive approach to the music. **Do not plan on learning your parts only during rehearsals!** If there are issues observed with any student's preparation level, they may be asked on a week's notice to perform certain parts of their ensemble music for their conductor. At the VYO level individual musicians as well as entire sections may be called to rehearsal early with advanced notice to work on particularly exposed passages.

Study with a private teacher, if at all possible. Private study is essential for ensuring the continuing development of your musical skills and for meeting the technical challenges of your ensemble music. If you need help finding a teacher, contact Myriam Bouti, myriam@vyo.org, to inquire about studio availability in the Lesson Program, or speak with your conductor.

Participate in other music activities, especially the school programs that are available to you. One rehearsal per week with us is not enough time to develop your ear, ensemble skills, and musicianship to the fullest. School programs offer not only opportunities for students to develop in these areas but also to develop their leadership skills. We also find that VYOA students who take part in their school ensembles advance more quickly. All VYOA students in elementary and middle school are required to participate in their school music program if one is offered.

Be a good colleague and role model by:

- **Being on time for rehearsals:** be in your seat, ready to play at least 5 and preferably 10 minutes before the scheduled start with all of your music and relevant equipment (e.g. mutes, pencil, reeds, etc.) within easy reach. ***Students are expected to arrive no later than 10 minutes prior to the start of rehearsal.***
- **Engaging fully in rehearsals:** pay attention, follow instructions, mark reminders and changes in your parts, and avoid distracting talk/activity. ***Cell phones and other devices are to be turned off during rehearsals*** – don't put your conductor or ensemble manager in the position of having to confiscate yours!
- **Being supportive of each other** – praise good work, offer assistance and encouragement when needed, hold each other to high standards.

Read all emails from your Conductor and Operations Staff. Respond to the emails in a timely manner if asked! These emails contain essential information related to your ensemble. Your response may be needed in order for the VYOA to proceed with organizing your season events.

Attendance and Lateness Policy

The VYOA's attendance and lateness policy recognizes that critical school or family events may conflict with rehearsals and that illnesses occur. Compliance with the VYOA school music participation policy may also cause musicians to miss rehearsals. Once musicians have missed their set number of allowed absences, they will be asked to come in and play for their conductor. This is to ensure that they are keeping pace with the rest of the ensemble (this is a practical, not punitive measure designed to maintain our high levels of artistic quality).

- **VT Youth Orchestra & VT Youth Philharmonia** – allowed no more than **two absences per rehearsal cycle** leading up to a major concert.
- **VT Youth Strings** – allowed no more than **two absences** per semester.
- **Presto, Da Capo, VYOA Jazz, & Grooves** – allowed no more than one absence per session.

Please make use of your allowed absences sparingly and strategically. We recommend that musicians use their allowed absences for things over which they have no control. These include illness, family emergencies, college visits, mandatory school events, or school music events. We ask that students and their families work together to avoid absences due to things that are under their control. These include family vacations, school work, work shifts, or other competing activities. Making competing commitments means making tough choices, a process that is itself an important learning experience!

Lateness: Rehearsals start on time. Late arrivals are disruptive to the group. Students who are repeatedly late will need to meet with their conductor. Students are expected to **arrive at least ten minutes prior** to beginning of rehearsal so they can be fully prepared and make it possible for rehearsal to start as scheduled. We ask that parents be mindful of this in planning transportation to rehearsals.

Members must notify their ensemble manager of any upcoming absence from rehearsal. Email is the best way to give notification. All absences, *including* SAT testing, Music Festivals, or illness, require that the ensemble manager be notified in advance of the absence.

School Music Program Participation Policy

As a key element in the VYOA's partnership with school music programs, **all VYOA students in elementary and middle school are required to participate in their school music program if one is offered.** Though there is no high school music program participation requirement, VYOA high school students are **expected** to participate in their school music program. At all grade levels, when scheduling conflicts arise between VYOA and school music events (especially performances), participation in those school music events is given precedence, resulting in an excused absence.

Ensemble Folder and Sheet Music Responsibilities

Your ensemble folder and sheet music are the property of VYOA. Losing or damaging your folder will incur a \$30 replacement fee. Each lost original (non-photocopied) piece of music may incur a fee of \$15 or more, depending on replacement cost or publisher penalties for lost rental materials. Whenever possible, we aim to provide high-quality photocopies to avert these types of problems. All photocopies should be returned following the concert unless students are told otherwise by their ensemble manager. Students are encouraged to write their name in pencil at the top right corner of their music if it has not already been written there prior to music distribution.

During rehearsals, students need a pencil with medium to soft black lead (No.2 or softer) and eraser available at all times. *VYOA sheet music should never be written upon with pens, markers, or colored pencils!*

Musician Behavior Expectations

Reasonable standards of behavior and dress are expected while rehearsing, performing, or participating in any event or activity associated with the Vermont Youth Orchestra Association. No set of rules can cover every possible situation. The list below, along with common courtesy and respect, offers a guide to appropriate behavior.

General behavior

1. Demonstrate **appropriate, respectful, and safe behavior** with VYOA staff, sectional coaches, and fellow students.
2. **Put trash in the appropriate containers.** Please help keep our building clean and well maintained!
3. Musicians need to demonstrate **safe behavior at all times while at the Elley-Long Music Center.** Running, rough housing, and using equipment for improper purposes will not be tolerated.
4. **During breaks from rehearsal,** musicians should remain inside ELMC or in the area immediately surrounding the building and stay out of the street. Ensemble manager approval is required for musicians to go beyond this defined area.
5. Everyone must take care to **avoid damaging instruments** or any property in the building. Members are responsible for their own instruments. **Do not leave instruments or bows unattended** where they might be damaged accidentally. Do not leave your instrument on your chair during breaks. ***Instruments should be safely put into cases during breaks or when not needed.*** All instruments should be insured; most homeowner or renter's insurance policies can include a rider to cover instrument insurance.
6. The use of *tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, or any illegal substances* is **strictly forbidden** in and around the Elley-Long Music Center at all times. Also, musicians are forbidden from vaping or bringing any illegal substances, drug paraphernalia, or weapons of any kind (e.g. knife, firearm) to the Elley-Long Music Center, areas surrounding the Elley-Long Music Center, or any of our concert sites. Violations of this policy are grounds for suspension or expulsion.

Rehearsal etiquette

1. ***Cell phones and other electronic devices are to be turned off during rehearsals!*** It is forbidden to record parts of VYOA full rehearsals, chamber rehearsals, concerts, sectionals, and auditions. If a musician needs a clip of rehearsal, they may contact the music director or their ensemble conductor to make arrangements for a portion of rehearsal to be recorded by VYOA staff.
2. **Restroom usage:** Please use the restrooms **before the rehearsal or at the break.** Students may not leave the rehearsal for any reason (other than for absolute emergencies) while it is in progress. Any issues with bathroom supplies or hygiene should be reported immediately to VYOA staff.
3. **Please do not bring food or drink into rehearsal spaces.** Water is the only exception. A **refillable water bottle** provides an excellent means of staying hydrated, avoiding spills, and reducing trash. Please eat your snacks in the hallway or lobby before or after rehearsal or during breaks, and remember to dispose of your trash properly.
4. **Listen carefully** to instructions from your conductor or manager. Do not talk while your conductor or manager is speaking. When being addressed prior to, or at the end of the rehearsal, stay in your seat and

do not pack up until the announcements have concluded. If you have difficulty hearing the conductor, please let them know immediately.

5. **Talk among musicians should be kept to a minimum**, and should deal directly with issues related to the music at hand. Musician attentiveness is essential for productive and smooth-running rehearsals.
6. **Books, homework, and other off-task materials are not to be brought into the rehearsal area** – being attentive and engaged even when you are not playing is an important part of being in an ensemble. You will learn important things about the music and how to improve your skills by observing your colleagues rehearsing.

Bullying and Harassment Policy

The VYOA strives to provide a safe, secure and respectful environment for all students at Elley-Long Music Center and at VYOA-sponsored activities. Bullying has a harmful social, physical, psychological and academic impact on bullies, victims and bystanders. Therefore, the VYOA has defined an explicit policy banning bullying at Elley-Long Music Center and at VYOA-sponsored activities.

Definition

Bullying is deliberate or intentional behavior using words or actions, intended to cause fear, humiliation, intimidation, harm or social exclusion. Bullying may be repeated behavior and involves an imbalance of power. The behavior may be motivated by an actual or perceived distinguishing characteristic, such as, but not limited to: age; national origin; race; ethnicity; religion; gender; gender identity; sexual orientation; physical attributes; physical or mental ability or disability; and social, economic or family status.

Bullying behavior can be:

1. **Physical** (e.g. assault, hitting or punching, kicking, theft, threatening behavior)
2. **Verbal** (e.g. threatening or intimidating language, teasing or name-calling, racist remarks)
3. **Indirect** (e.g. spreading cruel rumors, intimidation through gestures, social exclusion and sending insulting messages or pictures by mobile phone or using the internet – also known as cyber-bullying)

Prohibition

The VYOA prohibits all bullying, whether it is physical; verbal; indirect; cyber-bullying; bullying by proxy; or between students and students, students and adults, or adults and adults. Bullying behavior is prohibited in all VYOA sanctioned events and under VYOA supervision. Suspension or expulsion/termination from the organization are possible consequences for individuals found to have taken part in these behaviors.

Disciplinary Process

In addition to the expectations and policies shown above, the conductor of each orchestra may set additional requirements for rehearsal and concert behavior.

Failure to abide by any of these expectations or policies will be addressed through the following steps:

1. VYOA staff members speak with the student and/or parents concerning the problem.
2. If the problem persists, the Conductor and/or Director of Operations may remove the student from the activity or have the student sit out of one or more activity.
3. Failing a satisfactory resolution, the student may be expelled from the VYOA.
(Note: Tuition is non-refundable.)

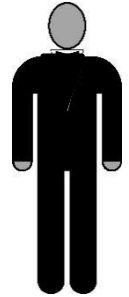
Concert Attire

Concert attire helps our students present a professional appearance and ensure a uniform look throughout the ensemble. **No one member's outward appearance should distract the audience from everyone's performance.**

Vermont Youth Orchestra, Vermont Youth Philharmonia & Jazz Programs

Students in the above ensembles are required to wear:

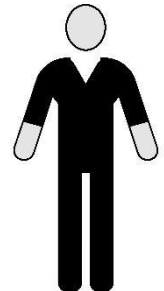
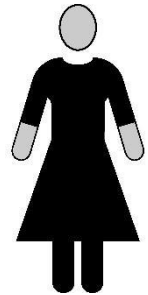
- Black button down dress shirt
- Black dress slacks
- Black socks, black dress shoes (no other colors, please!)
- Black suit jacket and/or long black tie are optional
- **Unacceptable:** jeans or leggings or athletic shoes



-OR -

Choice of:

- Long black dress (hem must fall **below the knee when seated**) with black socks or black hosiery and black dress shoes
- Long sleeved all-black shirt (**elbow length at minimum**) paired with solid black dress slacks; accompanied by black socks or black hosiery and black dress shoes
- Long sleeved all-black shirt (**elbow length at minimum**) paired with long black skirt (hem must fall **below the knee when seated**); accompanied by black socks or black hosiery and black dress shoes
- Shoulders must be covered



Unacceptable:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ○ Short skirts | ○ Sleeveless, short-sleeved, tank or tube tops |
| ○ Slit skirts | ○ Jeans or leggings |
| ○ Neck lines or back designs with significant skin exposure | ○ Bare feet or athletic shoes or flip-flops |
| | ○ Non-black articles of clothing |

Please Note: ALL BLACK ITEMS should be solid black without pattern or ornament

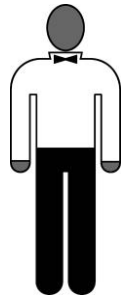
A student who fails to wear the appropriate attire for a concert may be withheld from performing in that concert.

Vermont Youth Strings and Da Capo

Students in the above ensemble are required to wear:

- Solid white button down dress shirt (long sleeved)
- Black dress pants
- Black socks and black dress shoes (no other colors, please!)
- Black bow tie (optional)

Unacceptable: jeans or athletic shoes

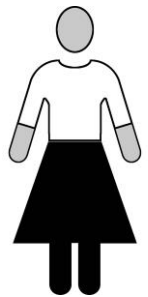


-OR -

- Solid white shirt (long or ¾ length sleeve)
- Solid black dress slacks or long black skirt (hem must fall **below the knee when seated**)
- Black socks or black hosiery and black dress shoes (no other colors, please!)
- Shoulders must be covered

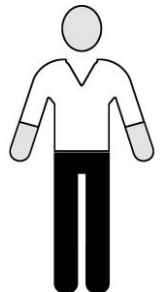
Unacceptable:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ○ Short skirts | ○ Sleeveless, short-sleeved, tank or tube tops |
| ○ Slit skirts | ○ Jeans or leggings |
| ○ Neck lines or back designs with significant skin exposure | ○ Bare feet or athletic shoes or flip-flops |
| | ○ Non-black articles of clothing |



Please Note: ALL BLACK ITEMS should be solid black without pattern or ornament

A student who fails to wear the appropriate attire for a concert may be withheld from performing in that concert.



Additional information for VYOA families

Tuition

Annual tuition is required for participation in all VYOA programs. Tuition may be paid in cash, check, credit card, or ACH. Payment plans are available, please see your tuition contract for details. Please direct any tuition payment questions to Office Manager, Brea Ghanem at brea@vyo.org.

Please note the following important tuition policies:

- For all orchestras and programs, tuition is non-refundable after the first day the ensemble meets.
- Student tuition for the current season must be paid in full in order for the student to receive an audition appointment for the coming season

VYOA Financial Aid Program

To ensure that all students are able to participate, the VYOA awards 10%-15% of tuition revenue in financial aid annually. Families with a combined household adjusted gross income up to \$120,000 are eligible to apply. An online application can be found at vyo.org. Each application is reviewed in confidence by an independent committee. For more information, please contact Executive Director, Rosina Cannizzaro at rosina@vyo.org.

Concert admission

Admission is charged for all orchestra concerts held at the Elley-Long Music Center unless otherwise noted. Tickets to VYO concerts and OrchestraPalooza are sold through the venue box office. Please visit vyo.org for ticket information.

Complimentary VYO concert tickets

All VYOA musicians are encouraged to attend the VYO's Fall, Winter, and Spring concerts. We offer each musician (except VYO members) one complimentary ticket to enable them to attend each of these concerts. Orchestra and program managers will inform families of how to access their complimentary ticket. **Please note:** student complimentary tickets must be reserved in advance and are not available the day of the concert at the venue box office. Some venue capacity may result in limited available complimentary tickets. These will be made on available on a first come, first served basis.

Complimentary tickets are not available for OrchestraPalooza. This concert is reserved seating.

Concert recordings

Concerts presented by VYOA are video recorded by our media partner, Media Factory. Links to the videos are sent to families after the concerts and are archived and available at mediafactory.org.

Parental/Guardian support

Supporting your child's VYOA participation: For students to benefit from everything the VYOA offers, we need parents to assist with their children's participation in the following ways:

- Read all emails and materials from VYOA. Respond in a timely manner when requested.
- Plan for your family to attend each of your child's VYOA concerts.
- Stay informed via the means described in "Communicating with the VYOA" section below.
- Ensure prompt arrival at rehearsals and concerts and pick-up at the end.
 - *Students are expected to arrive at least 10 minutes prior to the published start time for rehearsals.*
 - *Students must be picked up no later than 15 minutes following the end of a rehearsal or performance, especially if it is the last event of the day at ELMC.*
 - *Students whose siblings are in an ensemble whose rehearsals finish later than their own can remain in the building until family pick-up time, although we request that students age 10 and younger not be left unsupervised.*
- Support full attendance of your child at all rehearsals and events by avoiding conflicts between family plans and VYOA activities whenever possible.
- Support your child's private lessons, practice routine, and participation in school music activities.
- Provide a snack for your child for rehearsals.
- Introduce people to the VYOA, including parents of prospective students, and help grow our audience base by bringing friends to your child's concerts.
- Speak to VYOA staff members regarding any concerns surrounding your child's participation. The sooner we are aware of your concerns, the better chance we have of resolving them successfully.

Volunteering: At various points in each season, the VYOA needs assistance from parent volunteers. Typically, this includes helping at concerts or special events, serving as a chaperone for school tours or community concerts, or helping with a large office mailing. Parents are always welcome to contact the VYOA staff to volunteer or to add their name to a list of volunteers available for a particular task.

Donating: Please consider making a charitable gift to the VYOA to support accessibility to our programs through scholarship support. The VYOA is a 501(c)(3) organization and gifts are tax deductible to the extent of the law.

Recommended equipment/supplies for students

Students are required to have all applicable items with an asterisk (*) available for rehearsals and performances

General

- Medium to soft lead pencil with eraser*
- Folding music stand for tour performances

Electronics tools/smart device apps for everyone

- metronome (either dedicated device or app on phone)
- tuner (either dedicated device or app on phone)
- digital recorder (most smart phones offer this feature)

String players

- extra set of strings*
- mute* (keep in instrument case; always bring to rehearsal area if your music calls for muting)
- rosin*
- rock stop or strap for cellists*
(**required** at all times)
- end pin cover or rest for bassists*
- spare bow (for emergencies)
- cleaning cloth

Percussionists (one pair of each)

- Snare drum sticks*
- Timpani mallets*
- Yarn mallets*
- Bell/xylophone mallets*

Wind players

- instrument cleaning tools/supplies*
- instrument stand
- extra reeds*
- cork grease
- appropriate screwdrivers for minor repairs and adjustments
- extra pads

Brass players

- instrument cleaning tools/supplies
- valve oil*
- slide grease*
- slide lubricant and water bottle (trombones)*
- mutes (as required by repertoire)*
- instrument stand
- spare mouthpiece

Communicating with the VYOA

The VYOA staff communicates with students & parents primarily via email. Students and parents receive emails from their Orchestra conductor and ensemble managers on a regular basis regarding rehearsal schedules, performances and other important events. Please be sure to read all emails. The VYOA avoids overloading families with emails but activities in the normal course of the season do require frequent communication. Please keep your ensemble manager updated with any email address changes. If you suspect you are not receiving all VYOA emails, check your junk/spam folder periodically as this is where mass emails are sometimes routed.

Please read the **VYOA E-Newsletter**. It contains useful information regarding upcoming events and opportunities. If you have opted out of receiving it in the past, please contact info@vyo.org to resume delivery.

Ensemble managers do not hold regular office hours. Please feel free to call the VYOA office to leave them a voicemail message. Often times the fastest method of communication with staff is via email – see the first page for a list of these email addresses or consult the VYOA website at www.vyo.org

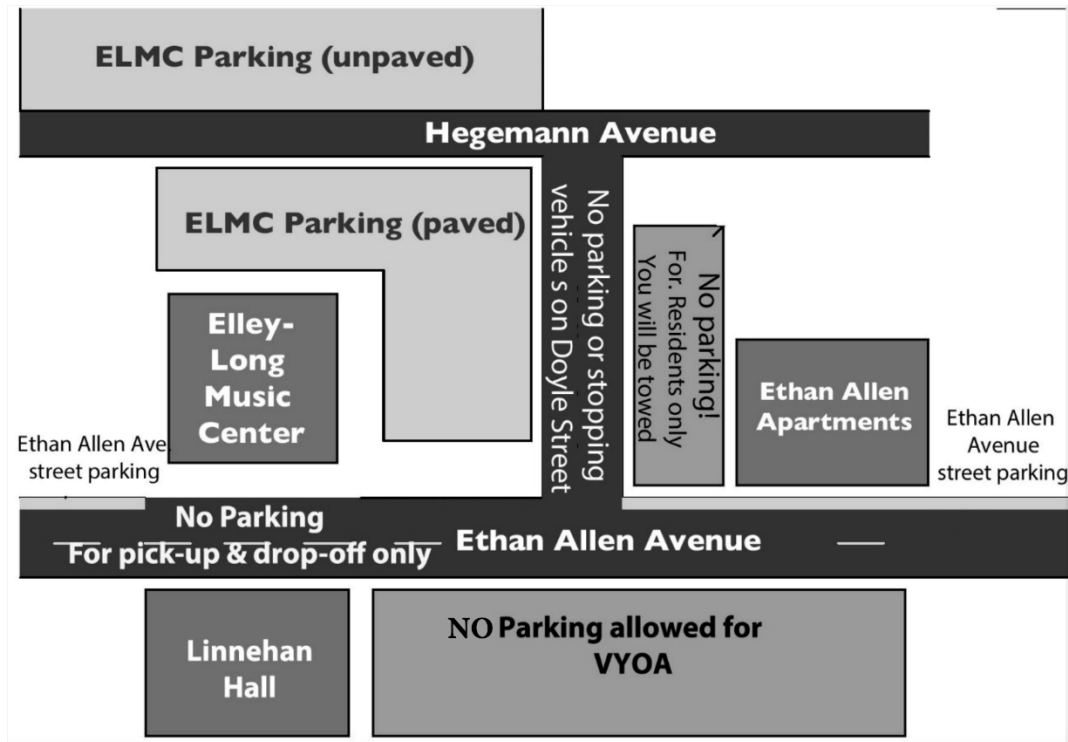
The VYOA website and Social Media: Please visit our website frequently! It contains a great deal of useful information and will help keep you up to date. While we do not rely solely on social media for communicating essential information, it is a useful way to keep current with VYOA events.

“Like” us on Facebook and Instagram @vyoaorg.

Weather conditions

The VYOA does not normally cancel concerts or rehearsals in the event of inclement weather. Please use your best judgment when deciding to travel to a VYOA event in bad weather. Please notify your ensemble manager if you decide not to attend an event because of weather conditions. If the VYOA does cancel an event, as much notice as possible will be given out via email, social media, and outgoing voicemail messages.

Parking at the Elley-Long Music Center at Saint Michael's College



Park only in the following areas:

- the paved lot directly behind and adjacent to the Music Center
- the grassy field behind the Music Center
- the street along Ethan Allen Ave

Please DO NOT park in any of the following areas:

- the single row lot adjacent to the apartment building next to the Music Center - you may be towed!
- the pull-off area directly in front of the Music Center – this area is needed as musician drop-off
- the lot adjacent to the dorm building (Linnehan Hall)

Please never park or idle on the street in front of Linnehan dorm (with Elley-Long on your left) forcing students to cross Ethan Allen Avenue. This is not a legal parking spot. This also creates a bottleneck for other traffic, including city buses that are trying to pass.

To access the front of Elley-Long for drop-off, approach Elley-Long so that the building is on your right (you will be driving south on Ethan Allen Avenue). You can do this by either using the north entrance to Fort Ethan Allen (the one closer to Susie Wilson Road) or if you use the south entrance (Barnes Avenue), you can pass by Elley-Long and turn around in the Linnehan parking lot just across the street. Doing this will allow safe use of the drop-off area in front of the building and will also mean students do not need to cross the street.

Music festival sponsorships

The VYOA sponsors participation in the **New England Music Festival** for VYOA students whose schools do not participate in the festival and for VYOA students who are homeschooled. VYOA students receive information via email in late September/early October on the sponsorship process. Families of participating students are responsible for all expenses and registration fees associated with the festival and are invoiced by the VYOA. Fees vary from year to year and we make every effort to notify families of total costs prior to the festival. For more information on the festival and the audition process, visit www.nemfa.org. Please note that the VYOA **cannot** sponsor participation in the **Vermont All-State Music Festival**. Students wishing to audition for All State must sign up through their high school music program (or as a homeschool). Visit www.vmea.org for more information.

Lost and found

A lost and found bin is located in the music library. Please pick up misplaced items as soon as possible. Unclaimed items are donated to Goodwill on a regular basis during the season. It is wise to label your music-related property (tuners, rock stops, instrument stands) to ensure they can be recovered easily if left at the Elley-Long Music Center.

Instrument Loans

While students are expected to provide their own instrument, we do have a limited number of instruments available for loan to VYOA musicians. These are instruments that are typically not available via rental (e.g. clarinets in A, double French horns.) There is no fee for the loan if the student's VYOA ensemble repertoire requires a related instrument not typically owned by a student musician. Examples include the piccolo for flutists, English horn for oboists, and E-flat, A, and bass clarinets. In special cases, these instruments can be loaned for short term, non-VYOA use. A fee is charged for these loans. The amount of the loan fee is set according to instrument type and duration of the loan.

Auditions, placements, role assignments, and awards

Annual Orchestra Placement Auditions

Auditions are required for placement in the following ensembles: Vermont Youth Orchestra, Vermont Youth Philharmonia, and Vermont Youth Strings.

When: All auditions are held annually in May. *Current students* must re-audition each year and automatically receive an audition appointment in early April. *New students* can email auditions@vyo.org to request an audition appointment. When appropriate, auditions can be scheduled outside the normal time frame, though timing or the existing ensemble makeup may delay a student joining an ensemble until later in the season. Mid-year auditions are offered in December only for students who did not audition for placement prior to the start of the season (ensemble assignments do not change over the course of the season, except in cases where there is an organizational need for a student to be reassigned).

Where: All auditions are held at the Elley-Long Music Center at Saint Michael's College.

Cost: There is no cost for any VYOA audition.

Time: Auditions are approximately 10 minutes in duration.

Placement results: Once auditions are completed, all placements are sent out via email to students and students' families in early June.

Eligibility: Auditions are open to instrumentalists currently in grades 2-11. Instrumentalists should have at least one year of experience on an orchestral instrument. Woodwind and brass players younger than 6th grade should have at least 2 years of experience on their instrument. Younger students may be permitted to audition if given a recommendation by their private instructor.

To maintain eligibility for VYOA ensemble membership, students in elementary and middle school must concurrently participate in their school music program if one is offered. At all grade levels, when scheduling conflicts arise between VYOA and school music events (especially performances), participation in those school music events is given precedence, resulting in an excused absence.

Requirements: Details of VYOA audition requirements can be found at www.vyo.org/auditions

VYOA Senior Soloist Auditions

Following their May regular season audition, all VYOA high school juniors are welcome to audition late spring (preceding their senior year) to perform as an orchestral soloist during the following season. Interested students must participate in a special audition, playing the selection they wish to perform as a soloist. No alternate audition day is offered. Senior solo auditions are only available to students who participate in VYOA their entire junior year. Soloist auditions for piano or voice are not allowed.

Piano accompaniment is required for this audition. Audition results are typically sent to all participants within the week following these auditions.

Students should be aware that most orchestral music written in the past 90 years is under copyright and often available only via rental from the publisher. In these cases, the VYOA covers the first \$500 of the rental or purchase cost. All students planning to participate in these auditions must check in with the music director to determine if your selected piece is suitable for programming and if it presents significant music rental or purchase

costs so that you can make an alternate repertoire choice if necessary. Because of reproduction and broadcast rights costs, videos of performances of works still under copyright cannot be included in the Media Factory broadcasts.

Ensemble placements

The VYOA artistic staff use an evaluation system developed during thousands of auditions over the past three decades and consult closely over the course of auditions to identify and contextualize each student's current level of development, taking into account not only what is observed in the audition, but also the quality of their VYOA ensemble participation in the previous season and the trajectory of growth demonstrated in the year between auditions. The goal is to determine the ensemble placement and role of each student that is developmentally appropriate – where the student will experience suitable levels of challenge and opportunities for growth, camaraderie, and artistic accomplishment. The VYOA placement audition process currently has 4 components: A scale and corresponding arpeggio, two minutes of a prepared piece showcasing the musician's best playing, an orchestral excerpt the musician chooses from a short list provided by the VYOA, and sight reading.

The following areas are key in determining instrumental ensemble placement:

- Technical level of audition repertoire (especially as it relates to position proficiency in strings)
- Technical facility
- Maturity of tone/projection
- Sight Reading
- Intonation
- Rhythmic accuracy
- Security in extreme registers
- Quality of audition preparation

Sight reading: Though sight-reading is one of the 4 components of the audition placement process, it serves also as a **diagnostic exercise** to identify elements of music notation students may have difficulty processing, which is a helpful guide for rehearsal and curriculum planning. **Students should not consider sight-reading difficulties as failures** nor give these exercises undue weight in their perception of the quality of their overall audition. Sight reading skills are especially taken into account when determining section leadership positions, as a well-developed level of musicianship is needed to succeed in a leadership role.

After all factors have been weighed in a student's instrumental audition, we determine the "natural" ensemble placement and role (e.g. 1st or 2nd violin section, section leadership) for which the student has demonstrated their qualification. Not until all auditions for an instrument are complete do we determine the actual placements we can offer students.

For some instruments, placements can be heavily influenced by the number of available positions—flute and clarinet, for example, often have more qualified candidates than available orchestral chairs for those instruments. In these cases, students who are qualified for membership in a particular orchestra may be waitlisted pending the decisions of students who were placed ahead of them.

Orchestra seating and part assignment policies

At VYOA, we strive to promote educational opportunity, access to resources, and community building as key components of our shared pursuit of artistic excellence. The following section's seating and part assignment policies are designed to promote that ideal while giving students meaningful opportunities to develop the skills and characteristics that will help them achieve their current and future musical goals.

VYO Seating and Part Assignment Procedures

VYO string section seating is determined by seating auditions held two times throughout the season. Specific excerpts taken from current performance repertoire will be assigned for seating auditions, all of which will be heard and adjudicated live by expert clinicians during regular rehearsal hours. These auditions are recorded so the conductor can hear them as well.

Rotating part assignments for the VYO woodwind/brass/percussion players are determined by the conductor for the year. Because there are ample opportunities for the conductor to hear soloistic playing by nearly every member of the winds/brass/percussion section during regular rehearsal time, they will not have regular seating auditions. Woodwind/brass/percussion players will occasionally have auditions for substantial solos in upcoming repertoire and will be adjudicated by the conductor before/after regular rehearsal hours. Because winds/brass/percussion players encounter soloistic passages in their music, they are periodically asked to play in special sectionals and coaching before regular rehearsal with advance notice.

IMPORTANT: VYO string players who know that they will be absent from rehearsal on a seating audition day are required to submit video recordings of the seating audition excerpts no later than 11:59 p.m. on the Friday before the scheduled audition. Be certain your video submission is public or unlisted on YouTube - a private video will not be accessible by the VYOA staff. Members who neither attend rehearsal nor submit a recording will be placed at the back of the section and may be called in for a special hearing with the conductor to ensure they are ready to play the concert.

VYO and VYP Woodwind and Brass Part Doubling

Rather than having fixed section seating, woodwind, brass, and percussion players are often given rotating part assignments for each concert. Players are expected to change seats—according to the part assignments—for each piece in order to maintain the correct positioning of voices within the section. The doubling of wind and brass parts is a common aspect of the youth orchestra experience. Occasionally, the conductor will ask that a part being doubled be momentarily performed by one player for orchestration, intonation, or ensemble reasons.

VYP, VYS, and Presto Seating and Part Assignment Procedures

All VYOA orchestras (except for VYO) use rotational string seating throughout the season. Rotational seating is non-hierarchical and often involves placing more experienced players throughout each section to ensure a strong artistic product and meaningful educational experience. At times, seating may be rotated between rehearsals as part of the educational process, but will be set into concert seating order well in advance of the performance. First violin/second violin assignments typically remain steady throughout the season, unless the addition of new players requires a re-balancing of sections.

VYOA Scholarships and Awards

VYP Friendship Award

The VYP Friendship Award was first awarded in April of 2010. This award was created by and is funded by the parents of Aaron Xue to honor his memory and highlight the importance and value of friendship among young musicians. Aaron was a VYP cellist who died unexpectedly in April of 2009. The award, as determined by VYOA staff, is given to the student who demonstrates exemplary character traits throughout the season while interacting with his/her fellow orchestra members, as shown in generosity with their time and energy, caring, willingness to listen, helpfulness, etc. The recipient is announced every year at the VYP Spring Concert in April.

Hermance Prize and Recital

The Hermance Prize is awarded annually to a Vermont Youth Orchestra senior who has performed as a soloist with a VYOA orchestra during the current concert season. The recipient of the prize is determined by their adjudicated performance at the Hermance Recital, which features performances by each senior soloist playing solo literature written with piano accompaniment or as an unaccompanied solo work. The Hermance Recital takes place in March or April, annually. Established in 1990 by the parents and grandfather of pianist Harry Hermance, this \$1,000 prize is presented at the May VYO concert in honor of Harry's commitment to musical excellence. VYOA students, especially the soloists' VYO colleagues, are strongly encouraged to attend the Hermance Recital. Admission is free.

Weathers Scholarship

Ann Weathers (1923-2012) was a long-time friend of the VYOA. She shared the Vermont Youth Orchestra Association's interest in helping young students achieve their musical potential. To this end, she established an annual award to assist a VYOA graduating high school senior with the pursuit of a Bachelor's degree in music. The exact amount will depend on the performance of the scholarship's endowment fund which has been \$1,500 in recent years. Any high school senior who is currently a VYOA ensemble member and plans to pursue a music degree in the areas of performance, education, composition, musical theater, and music therapy is eligible to apply. Applicants must demonstrate: financial need, an enthusiastic commitment toward pursuing a career in music, and a record of past artistic achievement and recognition. Of these criteria, financial need is the first to be considered. The application due date is late April and all senior VYOA members will be notified via email of application requirements and deadlines. Please contact rosina@vyo.org for more information and the application materials.