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Phoenix Youth Symphony

Winter 2019-2020



Grace Notes

President's Message



Michael Potter, President



I am extremely optimistic about the future of the Phoenix Youth Symphony! Why? Several reasons; I will share four.

The People – The people are what make PYS special. The students and parents who make the trek to rehearsal every Wednesday night and support us financially; many more each year donate over and above the tuition and fees. Our conductors, led by our Artistic Director, Matthew Kasper, bring the highest quality instruction in the Valley and ensure PYS remains the best choice in Arizona for the top musicians. Our volunteers are too numerous to name, but I want to specifically thank our parent committees that run each ensemble, support the conductors, care for the students and create a true family atmosphere.

The Purpose – Expanding Horizons Through Music and Developing the Next Generation of Artists, Patrons and Leaders. Leaders, by definition, lead. They set the pace. They set the tone. They change the narrative. They pursue audacious goals. They couple optimism, initiative and action to make the world a better place. I see burgeoning leaders in every ensemble at PYS. I see growing leadership skills in our conductors and staff. I see selfless, servant leadership from many of our members; some have been supporting and leading PYS for 25+ years. The world needs more leaders. The world needs more leaders in the classical arts. PYS exists to help fill that void.

The Partnerships – Over the last 3 years we have made it a part of our culture to partner with like minded arts organizations in the Valley with the goal of providing opportunities for our students and strengthening the classical arts in Arizona. Partnerships with ASU School of Music, the Arizona Piano Institute, Arizona School for the Arts, the Phoenix Symphony, Arizona MusicFest and the Phoenix Chamber Music Society. I also want to mention our enhanced partnership with Galvin, Gaustad and Stein, the boutique wealth management firm that has managed our endowment since Dick Gardner engaged Mark Stein's services 13 years ago. The endowment has flourished under Mark's guidance and he has become a true partner with PYS. This year alone Mark has donated over 75% of his fees back to PYS and has made the commitment that he will donate 50% of any management fees generated from PYS members to PYS.

The Possibilities – When you couple optimism with initiative and action the sky is the limit. When I think of the possibilities I am reminded of the start. Of how PYS was founded. Of the ethos, the spirit, that is still the life-blood of PYS. A small group of dreamers wanted a professional orchestra so, in 1947, they started one. That same small group wanted a youth orchestra to offer high level, pre-professional training for top students who wanted to join the professional orchestra so, in 1952, they started one. The ethos of PYS is dreams, optimism, initiative and action! We channel the spirit of those pioneers, and off all the dreamers and optimists that have followed over the last 70+ years, as we aggressively pursue our mission and vision for the future.

Michael Potter

(Continued on back)



ORCHESTRAL TRAINING PROGRAM

Todd A. Betz, Orchestra Manager



What a fantastic PYS season! 2019-2020 has had wonderful experiences and outstanding performances. PYS was able to have a unique retreat experience this season with the Youth Symphony, Symphonette and Symphonic Winds all attending retreat at beautiful Prescott Pines on the same weekend. Prescott Pines can facilitate and host all three ensembles at the same time providing a terrific bonding weekend for the ensembles. The String Orchestra shared a side by side day at Friendly Pines with the Prelude Strings. The Prelude Strings students spent a day camp in Prescott concluding with a side by side rehearsal with the String Orchestra students. This was a first for the Prelude Strings and we look forward to additional opportunities for them next season.

PYS has had great performances through the season providing performance opportunities in our community's finest performing arts venues. The Fall All-Ensembles Concert on October 27, 2019 was held in the beautiful Ikeda Theater at Mesa Arts Center. An acoustically gorgeous stage. The Youth Symphony welcomed guest artist Marcy Rosen performing the Saint-Saens Cello Concerto no. 1 in the Youth Symphony Fall Concert. Maestro Kasper expertly lead the Youth Symphony's performance of the Sibelius Symphony No.1 at the Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts November 3, 2019.

The new 2020 year kicked off with outstanding performances at the 2020 Young Musicians Competition hosted at the Mesa Community College Performing Arts Center. The competition produced beautiful music making and solid winners from the various Junior and Senior divisions.

Junior Division:

Piano – Lawrence Wren

Brass/Percussion – Campbell Steward, Xylophone

Woodwind – Minjee Kim, Clarinet

Lower Strings – Alex Gong, Viola

Upper Strings – Jonathan Okseniuk, Violin

Lower Strings

1st Place – Vincent Claes, Cello

2nd Place – Jonathan Pak, Cello

3rd Place – Audrey Wang, Viola

4th Place – Tony Kim, Cello

5th Place – Feyi Adebekun, Cello

Upper Strings

1st Place – Audrey Wang, Violin

2nd Place – Sophia Zhang, Violin

3rd Place – Ethan Yang *, Violin

4th Place – Louisa Ma, Violin

* Grand Prize Winner

** Clotilde Otranto Prize Winner

Senior Division:

Piano/Harp

1st Place – Miles Fawson, Piano

2nd Place – Marina Tiffany, Harp

Woodwind

1st Place – Caroline Wu, Oboe

2nd Place – Andrew Kim, Clarinet

3rd Place – Daniel Walker **, Flute

Brass/Percussion

1st Place – Caden Potter, Marimba

The Youth Symphony followed up their Fall Concert with the Music Memory concert on January 28, 2020 and the Side-by-Side concert on Feb. 5, 2020 with the Phoenix Symphony in Symphony Hall. Both concerts featured Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet. The Side By Side also featured the winner of the 2020 Young Musicians Competition Ethan Yang performing the Tachikovsky Violin Concerto in D Major and the Otranto Prize Winner Daniel Walker -flute, performing the Ibert Flute Concerto. Most recently PYS celebrated our music teachers with the Teacher Appreciation Concert on February 23, 2020 at the new Madison Center for the Performing Arts. Teachers were offered free tickets to the concert where we recognized the 2020 Dr. Walter Temme Excellence in Music Education Award winner, Danica Terzic. Mrs. Terzic was one on 10 nominees we received from PYS students and families.

I am so grateful for all the volunteers in our program. We cannot provide the best orchestral music program and performance opportunities in the valley for our students without your assistance. As one season ends the cycle continues and we gear up for the next remarkable season with entrance auditions for the 2020-2021 season.

Thank you all,

Todd Betz

PYS Orchestra Manager

PYS Percussion Director

“Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and life to everything.”. — Plato.



Dear PYS Family,

I hope everyone is staying safe and healthy during this odd time in our history. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced all of us to confront a new normal and PYS is no exception. It was with great sadness that we had to cancel our chamber concert in March which was set to feature chamber groups comprised of PYS students as well as a collaboration with the chorus of the First United Methodist Church in Phoenix in Haydn's *Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross*. We remained hopeful that we would still be able to hold our final all-ensembles concert, however, due to Symphony Hall being closed until May 10th we also regrettably had to cancel that concert.

The upside to this pandemic is that it has forced a level of creativity from our conductors and staff in how to hold weekly sessions with our students. The PYS board and conductors made the decision to continue to hold virtual sessions at our normal Wednesday evening time through May, essentially extending our season when many other organizations are cancelling theirs. We feel it is extremely important to keep our students engaged with music at a time when so much has been taken away from them and to continue to strive to give the the best PYS experience possible at this time.

These sessions have been held on a variety of virtual platforms. Our String Orchestra conductor, Bethaney Cross, has held sections playing each individual part (on each instrument) herself and having the kids play along. She also just had Simply Three, probably some of our most famous PYS alums, join her String Orchestra for a little Q & A. Dr. Temme decided to hold seating auditions virtually and Brian Mauer has been creating customized daily practice plans for his kids in Prelude Strings. Aaron Vogel, our Wind Ensemble director, has been having guest speakers talk with his group about being a professional musician and music educator. Youth Symphony has had Tito Munoz, Music Director of The Phoenix Symphony talk to the students about conducting and what it means to be the music director of a major symphony orchestra. Ilana Setapen, Associate Concertmaster of the Milwaukee Symphony joined us to talk about leadership in an orchestra and Composer Nina Young, who just had a piece commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, joined us last night to discuss composition and the creative process in this odd time.

As we look forward we are moving all our auditions in May to a virtual platform which will make it safe and easy for all students to audition for PYS. If the pandemic slows down and it is safe we hope to have some get together over the summer. We are planning to move ahead with a full season next year with many new and exciting opportunities for our students.

These are trying times, but the board, staff, volunteers and students have all come together to ensure PYS continues on.

We thank you for your continued support of PYS and hope that you are staying safe and healthy and we look forward to seeing you in the Fall for our first concerts of the 20/21 season.

Sincerely,
Matthew Kasper





Phoenix Youth Symphony

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(President's Message continued from front)

My article for this edition of Grace Notes was submitted the first week of March...then the world changed. So, I offer this prologue as an updated introduction to this edition of Grace Notes.

Yes, I am still incredibly optimistic about the future of the Phoenix Youth Symphony (and to optimistic I will add that I am hopeful and excited!) Our conductors, staff, volunteers and board (as you can read in Artistic Director Matthew Kasper's article) are rising to the moment and showing great leadership and resolve. When we were displaced from our rehearsal and performance venues our conductors were adamant that we must continue to offer our students engagement, instruction and community at this time. They were so resolute that we actually extended our season through the end of May!

A few housekeeping items: 1) We will have to postpone our annual meeting that was planned for Tuesday, May 12, 2020. We may have to hold the meeting remotely and will let you know as soon as we can. 2) We will send out ballots for the 2020/21 board elections in May. 3) We can still use your support financially. We did not miss a payroll or cancel contracts with any staff through this time and we appreciate your ongoing support that makes this possible.

We are planning for the regular start of our 2020/2021 season in August. Auditions are taking place, acceptance letters will go out, the season calendar is being booked and the conductors are planning their musical selections. At the same time, we are exploring contingency plans if we need to be creative and unique in our offerings as we fulfill our mission of Expanding Horizons Through Music and Developing the Next Generation of Artists, Patrons & Leaders!

Now more than ever the world needs music. Now more than ever the world needs leadership. Now more than ever the world needs community and fellowship and social connection.

PYS is in a unique position to meet all of these needs and more...how can you not be hopeful and excited and optimistic?

To sum up...I am optimistic!

And I hope you are too.

Respectfully,

Michael Potter

PYS Board Chair/President

www.phoenixyouthsymphony.org

Music Memory 2020



For 60 years, thousands of elementary students have packed into yellow school buses and made the journey to Music Memory. For most, it is their first time hearing a live symphony perform. For many, it is their first encounter with classical music. For all, it is a memory not easily forgotten. This year's event drew 53 groups from all over the valley.

The morning began with a lively instrument petting zoo, in which members of the symphony interacted with young students, allowing them to play instruments. One highlight was hearing the lower brass section playing riffs from *Star Wars* and watching awe spread on the elementary students' faces. "You can play that?!" one fourth grader asked.

Once the Youth Symphony returned to the stage, all 2,600 attending students and chaperones were introduced to the instrument families by PYS musicians. The percussion section was a favorite among the crowd!

"My favorite instrument was the drums, I also liked the harp." -Angela, a student who attended this year's Music Memory.

Then, under Maestro Kasper, the ensemble performed dance selections from Sergei Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*. Students were able to hear how different emotions and events are conveyed through music and instruments.

One student wrote: *"Thank you for giving fourth grade an amazing field trip. I appreciate it very much. I was impressed with the performance about Romeo and Juliet. **It was thrilling and exhilarating music.**"*

Throughout the performance, student art that had been sent in, was displayed on large screens. Students really love seeing their artwork on the large screen!

"Thank you for your fantastic performance for me to see. Also I was grateful that you picked my picture up on stage. I was really happy to see it." -Ben

And for the second year, curriculum aligned with the state standards was made available online for teachers to download and use with classes. Before attending, students studied instrument families, concert etiquette, the composer Sergei Prokofiev, and the piece, *Romeo and Juliet*.

This event, which was offered at no charge, was made possible through long-time support through generous grants from the William L and Ruth T Pendleton Memorial Fund.

Madison, a fourth grader who attended sums it up well:



“Dear Youth Symphony, I loved the performance. I had never heard anything like it. **If the concert cost money, I would have payed extra for it** ... on a scale of one to ten I would rate the show 100! I hope someday I can be as good as you guys. So thank you for performing. I loved it so much.”

This year’s event excited the young crowd and made a lasting impression:

*“Thank you orchestra for the wonderful and hard-working performance and **I decided to play the flute!**” -Cruz, a student who attended this year’s Music Memory.*

*“**You guys made my day.** After I heard all the beautiful music, I can’t wait to go back next year!” – Katlah, a student who attended this year’s Music Memory.*

*“I’m so grateful I had the opportunity to come and see the Youth play Romeo and Juliet. I had the best time ever. **I will never forget!**” -Kalliope, a student who attended this year’s Music Memory.*

And, finally, Parker says it all:

*“Thank you for giving us the **experience of a lifetime!** You have **created memories that will never be erased!** Thank you!!! Sincerely, Parker*



PYS MEMBERSHIP

If you would like to support our wonderful Phoenix Youth Symphony through your membership, please contact Dana Dean (480) 342-9124. She will send you a PYS Membership Form with the levels of support, i.e. Individual at \$50, and New Life Member at \$500. Please let your family and friends know of this opportunity to support our young musicians and conductors. Each member receives the GRACENOTES, and invitations to our social events, including the Competition Winners Luncheon, held each February and an opportunity in October to meet our conductors, staff and Board.