

The Benefits of Youth Symphony

What do the rigors of playing an instrument, practicing scales, learning pieces, memorizing pieces and going to auditions develop in students? How do participating in music groups and performances enhance one's understanding of and participation in the world?

Many of the benefits of music education are recognized, from enhanced language acquisition to development and refinement of fine motor skills and spatial awareness. Children become well-rounded individuals through music education. Youth Symphony takes this further, producing individuals who are persistent, disciplined, timely, dependable, creative, problem-solving, thoughtful, communicative, mindful, tolerant, consistent, flexible, patient, accountable, responsible, honest and have integrity. They understand, and embrace, teamwork and multiple points of view. They pursue excellence and are risk-takers. If you see a successful professional person in our community, chances are she or he has "a little youth symphony" or similar experience in her or his past.

Of the recent college-bound YYSO seniors, 47% planned to major in music as music educators and/or performers. Fifty-three percent planned to major in something else, although many indicated in their senior bios that they planned to continue music in some form, as a minor, or through participation in a school or community orchestra. For these 53%, music and their symphony experience helped develop key characteristics that will serve them in any of their chosen fields. Youth Symphony Benefits include:

Persistence & Discipline

Calvin Coolidge, former U.S. President, remarked on persistence: "Nothing in the world can take the place of Persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan "Press On" has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race." Symphony musicians practice and learn how to work through the tough sections until they are mastered. Then, they practice some more!

Timeliness & Dependability

Symphony musicians pay attention to pieces and come in at the right time. They show up for rehearsals and performances on time. They know how they contribute to the group experience and that others depend on their presence and contributions.

Creativity & Problem-Solving

Symphony musicians become and are creative. This is a transformative process that is largely experiential, spurred by interactions with others who are creative, steeped in enough opportunities for knowing one's self and couched in an environment where there are no "mistakes," no "bad or wrong ideas" only building blocks for even better ideas. As a result, symphony musicians are excellent problem solvers.

Thoughtfulness

Symphony musicians think. Engaged through the music and with each other, they think in relational ways. Per Margaret Mead, that is a good thing: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Communication & Mindfulness

Symphony musicians have one eye on their music, one eye on the conductor and a heightened awareness of everyone around them. They become excellent communicators and practitioners of mindfulness. They know the best time to do things, what/who is most important at that time and what is the right thing to do.

Compassion & Tolerance

Symphonies bridge gaps and build bridges, the only requirement being "can the music be played?"

Consistency

Any musician can have a wonderful day, a day where all notes are hit and everything is on time and in tune. The mark of a good symphony musician is consistency, and that on most days, most notes are hit and almost everything is on time and in tune.

Flexibility

Sometimes, rehearsals flow easily. Sometimes, nothing seems to work: the tempos, the timing, the tuning or the temperaments. Symphony musicians are flexible with all of this *and* with broken strings, split or cracked reeds and sticking keys.

Patience

Mastery of pieces by an individual takes time. Mastery of pieces by a collection of individuals takes time. Just like at basketball, soccer or football practices, rehearsals have some "seat warming" time. Symphony musicians give their peers the time they need to master their parts in order for the whole piece to be the best it can be.

Accountability & Responsibility

Members of a symphony are members of a group. If one person does not learn her or his part, everyone suffers. Symphony musicians learn their music and come to rehearsals and performances ready to participate.

Honesty & Integrity

Former YYSO Conductor Carol Alexander gave us the phrase "commitment to the composer." This fundamental premise guided her leadership in YYSO. When one is committed to implementing a piece as the composer created it, using all of the instruments, following tempos and embracing dynamics fully, one engages music in a way that both honors past effort and engages experiences that can come only through such commitment and freeing of individual projection or bias.

Teamwork & Perspectives

One instrument does not make a symphony. Symphony musicians learn to work as a team, to support each other and, just like sports teams, to help the group advance as a unit. Symphony musicians have the added benefit of understanding the view of the audience and the musician's role in the performer/audience relationship: first, that a relationship exists; second, that "it is not all about the performers;" and third, that the performance becomes better when the relationship is valued.