

POCONO YOUTH ORCHESTRA
Mr. Michael Montero, Music Director & Conductor
2024-2025 HANDBOOK



Pocono Youth Orchestra, P.O. Box 1101, Stoudsburg, PA 18360
email: music@pocono-youth-orchestra.org, website: www.pocono-youth-orchestra.org

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POCONO YOUTH ORCHESTRA
SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

ORGANIZATION

The Pocono Youth Orchestra (PYO) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization providing a valuable educational and cultural outlet for young musicians in our region.

HISTORY

PYO was founded in 1987 by parents of young musicians, with the vision that their children would play together in a musical ensemble. That dream became a reality and continues today. We begin our thirty-seventh active* season (2024-2025) with our fourth Music Director—Mr. Michael Montero in his fourth official season with PYO.

*PYO was on hiatus in the 2020-2021 season due to pandemic-related limitations.

MISSION

The mission of PYO is to educate and inspire young musicians through the pursuit of excellence in musical performances.

MUSICAL EDUCATION

Our young musicians practice throughout the year under the guidance and instruction of Mr. Montero. In addition, PYO sponsors and encourages youth trips to hear professional symphony orchestras. Students have attend performances of the Allentown Symphony Orchestra at Miller Symphony Hall in Allentown and the New York Youth Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

PYO orchestras perform three times a year at the Cecilia S. Cohen Recital Hall at East Stroudsburg University and area school auditoriums. Smaller ensembles perform other concerts throughout the year. These have included performances for Arts on the Mountain, Fine Arts Discovery Series, the Pennsylvania Federation of Music Clubs State Convention, as well as area schools and nursing homes.

COMMUNICATION

EMAIL

PYO staff communicate with parent(s)/guardian(s) and student members primarily through email. If you do not have an email account, we ask that you create a free account with one of the many free email providers. Please be sure to keep PYO updated with any email address changes by sending email correspondence to music@pocono-youth-orchestra.org.

NEWSLETTER

PYO may send a newsletter, *PYO Upbeat*, containing important information regarding upcoming rehearsals, performances, and other important events. The newsletter will be mailed or emailed directly to members and their family.

FACEBOOK

Please check the [PYO Facebook](#) page regularly for the latest updates and news.

WEATHER (LATE CANCELLATIONS)

In the event of inclement weather or an unforeseen emergency, it may become necessary to cancel rehearsal, in which case PYO will:

- Send a text message announcing the cancellation via remind

To sign up for remind alerts please use the following codes at www.remind.com to receive your ensemble's notifications:

- PJSO: 8284kf
- PYO: hdf99e9

TUITION

Tuition for the 2024-2025 season of the Pocono Youth Orchestras is as follows:

PYO Strings	\$450 annually
PYO Band students participating session 2 & 3 only	\$300 annually
PJSO	\$360 annually

Tuition is due in full at the first rehearsal of each session. Unless prior arrangements have been made, students who are not paid in full prior to the third rehearsal will not be admitted to rehearsal.

PAYMENT METHODS

Tuition may be paid by cash, check, money order, or Paypal. Checks and money orders should be made payable to "Pocono Youth Orchestra." Please include the student's full name in the memo line.

PAYMENT PLANS

Payment plans are currently not available. Exceptions may be granted to families with multiple students participating if a request is made in advance.

LATE FEES

A \$25 late fee will be assessed for any late tuition. Payment is considered late if it is received by PYO after the first rehearsal.

REFUNDS

Each year, PYO makes a season-long financial commitment to the development of each musician, therefore no refund of tuition can be made once a student has accepted membership.

FINANCIAL AID

Financial assistance is currently not available.

REFERRAL INCENTIVE

New member referral incentives are available to current/returning members for referring new members to join any level of PYO. A \$20 per referral tuition credit for the session after the referral is made shall apply. A “new member” is any student who has not participated in any of the three (3) sessions the previous year at any level (PJSO, PCSO, or PYSO). New members who are referred by a current/returning member must enter the name of the referring member in their registration form for the credit to be valid. Multiple referral credits may be earned for the referral of multiple new members, not to exceed the full cost of tuition in a given session. Referral credits have no cash value. Referral credits in excess of the tuition value of the following session may be carried over to subsequent sessions during continuous membership. Referral credits are non-transferable and apply only to the member whose name is given as the referral source.

MENTOR PROGRAM

PYO seeks to identify PYO strings players to serve as PJSO mentors. Approved mentors will assist the Music Director at PJSO rehearsals with tuning, fingering, and string technique, as many students could benefit from assistance during the rehearsal. All PYO strings players who serve as mentors to PJSO will also assist with the set up and takedown of rehearsals. Approved mentors may also choose to offer individual assistance sessions to an assigned PJSO student. All approved mentors may request the Music Director sign off on related volunteer hours. Any PJSO student who desires assistance from a PYO mentor may make a request to music@pocono-youth-orchestra.org. Being assigned a mentor is based on availability of mentors on a first come, first served basis (appropriate to instrument).

AUDITION REQUIREMENTS

Any student new to our organization and any student seeking to transition from one PYO group to another must audition. Steps for a successful audition:

1. With the help of your music teacher, determine which orchestra is the best fit for you (see “SECTION II: ORCHESTRA MATTERS, ORCHESTRAS” for a list of techniques and skills required for each level and have your private teacher fill out the teacher recommendation form found on www.pocono-youth-orchestra.org).
2. Determine which audition format is best for you—live or video.
3. For live auditions, contact Mr. Michael Montero at violinfixer4@icloud.com to schedule an audition time.
4. Complete the audition form, found on pocono-youth-orchestra.org, and prepare your music.
5. For video auditions, submit the audition form and teacher recommendation form by email along with the video using WeTransfer to violinfixer4@icloud.com.

SCHOOL PARTICIPATION POLICY

The PYO program is an enhancement to, and not a substitute for, existing school music programs. All students accepted into PYO must be enrolled as regular members of their school band or orchestra program, if one exists. Homeschool students are exempt from this requirement.

CONCERT TICKETS

All PYO and PJSO concerts are free and open to the public without tickets for all three (3) sessions in the 2024-2025 season. Donations at the door or online via fundraiser link in the concert program are welcome and appreciated.

SECTION II: ORCHESTRA MATTERS

THE ORCHESTRAS

POCONO YOUTH ORCHESTRA (PYO)

PYO is a full orchestra reserved for outstanding string, wind, and percussion players whose technical level is highly advanced, who show strong musicality and musicianship, and who are capable of the discipline necessary to perform in a top-level orchestra. In general, the orchestra is for students in grade nine (9) through college. Other students who qualify based on performance ability will gain membership with the approval of the Music Director.

String candidates should be prepared to:

- Perform their own selection of music
- Prepare two major scales in three octaves

Wind candidates should be prepared to:

- Perform their own selection of music
- Prepare two major scales in two octaves

Techniques and skills required for this ensemble:

- Students can shift fluently up to fifth position (string players)
- Students display good tone quality
- Students play with expression
- Students perform contrasting dynamics
- Students perform with quality, centered tone
- Students can perform a range of articulations
- Students can comfortably read key signatures up to four sharps or four flats

POCONO JUNIOR STRINGS ORCHESTRA (PJSO)

PJSO is a fun, introductory ensemble for string players with as little as 1-2 years of study and focused on growth. Beginning students considered for this ensemble can hold their instruments and bows properly, and can read notes on A and D strings (G and D for bass). As students progress they will begin to make visual contact with and follow the Conductor while playing their instrument. PJSO performs a wider range of string repertoire. Students develop their ensemble skills, becoming more aware of their section players, understanding how sections of an orchestra are connected to each other, creating visual contact with the

Conductor, following the Conductor, matching bow strokes, and following the section leader. Students work on keeping balance and dynamic contrasts. Parts will be adapted for beginners as needed.

Candidates should be prepared to:

- Prepare their own selection of music
- Prepare two major scales in one or two octaves

Beginner Techniques and skills required for this ensemble:

- Students can identify and play whole, half, quarter, and eighth notes
- Students display proper holding of instrument and bow
- Students can identify and play two-note slurs
- Students can identify and play dynamics (forte to piano)

Intermediate Techniques and skills required for this more advanced parts in this ensemble:

- Students can fluently shift to third position
- Students display beginning/emerging vibrato
- Students display good tone quality
- Students play with musicianship
- Students are familiar with key signatures containing up to three sharps or three flats

WEEKLY REHEARSAL TIMES AND LOCATIONS

Pocono Youth Symphony Orchestra (PYSO) Thursdays 6:00-7:30 pm
Stroudsburg Junior High School

Pocono Junior Strings Orchestra (PJSO) Tuesdays 6:00-7:00
Stroudsburg Junior High School

REHEARSAL EXPECTATIONS

Students are expected to adhere to the following rules for rehearsals. Failure to adhere to these expectations may result in dismissal:

1. Please plan to arrive at least 10 minutes before the start of a rehearsal. Percussionists should plan to arrive at least 15 minutes prior to rehearsal to tune the timpani, set the percussion section according conductor's request, and have proper sticks and mallets for the repertoire. Percussionists must bring their own snare mallets, timpani mallets, and when possible bring their own triangle, and crash cymbal. PYO will provide mallet instruments, bass drum, snare drum, timpani, and chimes.
2. Please bring to all rehearsals:
 - Instrument and all accessories (reed, valve oil, rosin, tuner as applicable to instrument)
 - Pencil with eraser
 - Music in a folder
3. Please bring emergency repair items (e.g., extra set of strings, reeds, cork grease, etc. as applicable to instrument).
3. Food, drinks, and gum are not permitted. Water bottles are permitted.

4. Cell phones should be turned off and stored. Any student using a cell phone may have the phone confiscated until the end of the rehearsal.
5. Instruments should not be left on chairs or on the floor for any duration of time. Instruments should be safely put away in cases when not in hand. PYO is not responsible for damage to instruments.
6. The use of alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs is strictly prohibited and is grounds for immediate and permanent dismissal from the organization.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Consistent attendance is crucial to the success and musical growth of PYO. All members are expected to attend all weekly rehearsals, dress rehearsals, and concerts.

ABSENCES

Each student will be allowed one (1) excused absence per session. This is more than generous when compared with other youth orchestra attendance policies.

REPORTING AN ABSENCE

To report an absence, submit an email to music@pocono-youth-orchestra.org. Absences should be reported at least one (1) week in advance. For unforeseen absences, an absence report is due no later than one (1) week following the absence. When reporting an absence, the reason for the absence should be stated. If no reason is given the absence will be considered unexcused.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

PYO reserves the right to determine if an absence is excused or not regardless of having submitted an absence report for each absence. Absence reports must be sent to music@pocono-youth-orchestra.org before the absence (when possible) and must include the reason for the absence. Examples of excused absences are:

1. Car accident on the way to rehearsal
2. Death in the family
3. Illness
4. Family emergency (“My dog had to go to the vet” is not a valid excuse.)
5. Mandatory school event (e.g., school play, PMEA band or orchestra concert)
6. Religious commitment (e.g., religious holiday, church Cantata rehearsal)
7. College music audition (College visitation should be scheduled around PYO events*)
8. Family marriage (Family vacation should be scheduled around PYO events*)

*Once the season rehearsal and concert schedule is published (available at the first rehearsal), we ask that you reserve all PYO rehearsal and concert dates before you make family vacation or other plans.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

Examples of unexcused absences are:

- School assignments (e.g., studying for exams, completing papers, or projects)
- Social events (e.g., church youth outing, school dances)
- Non-school events

TARDINESS

Rehearsal time is limited, therefore starting promptly is very important. Arriving late (15 minutes or more after the scheduled start time) two (2) times will count as one (1) absence.

DRESS REHEARSAL AND CONCERT ATTENDANCE

Dress rehearsals and concerts are mandatory. Any student who misses a dress rehearsal may not be allowed to perform in the concert. Missing a concert is grounds for dismissal from the organization.

CONSEQUENCES

Only one (1) absence is allowed regardless of excused or unexcused status. Students who miss more than one (1) rehearsal per session may not be permitted to perform in the concert. Students who incur an unexcused absence may not be permitted to perform in the concert. Students may appeal by having their music ready to perform alone in front of the Conductor privately after their second missed rehearsal. Failure to perform their music correctly will result in missing that session's concert. Students are still required to attend all remaining concert preparation rehearsals to maintain membership. Students will move to last chair of their section until the next seating audition is held. All decisions regarding absences are final and at the discretion of the Music Director. Excessive absences and/or tardiness will be assessed by the Music Director and the Board of Directors, and may result in the dismissal of the student from the organization.

ORCHESTRA SEATING PLACEMENT

Seating will be determined by a seating audition near the beginning of each season and/or session, or at the discretion of the director. The audition results will be used to assign seating in a manner that will maximize the educational effectiveness of the orchestra and its ensemble playing. If a musician is absent from a rehearsal in which a seating audition is held, the seating audition may not be rescheduled. The student will be placed at the back of the section until the next seating audition is held. Seating assignments are at the sole discretion of the artistic staff. Seating placements are never final.

GUESTS AT REHEARSALS

All rehearsals are CLOSED to parent(s)/guardian(s), siblings, and friends. Potential orchestra members who wish to sit in may do so only with prior permission from the Conductor. The Conductor reserves the right to ask anyone who is being distraction to leave.

STUDENT DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP

Students are asked to be in their assigned seat, ready, with their instrument tuned, and warming up 15 minutes before the rehearsal start time. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are expected to pick up their child promptly after each rehearsal is over. PYO staff will contact the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) if their child is consistently picked up late. If late pick-up continues to be an issue, the student may be dismissed from the organization.

DRESS REHEARSAL INFORMATION

Dress rehearsals typically take place on the day of the concert at the concert venue. Details regarding dress rehearsal dates, times, etc. will be communicated to parent(s)/guardian(s) and students prior to each dress rehearsal.

DRESS REHEARSAL ATTIRE

Concert dress is required at dress rehearsals that take place on concert day (see Concert Dress Code). Concert dress is not required at rehearsals or even dress rehearsals that take place on a day other than the concert day; causal dress is appropriate.

CONCERT INFORMATION

Concerts take place in the Cecilia S. Cohen Recital Hall at East Stroudsburg University or local school auditoriums. Details regarding concert location, dates, times, etc. will be communicated to parents(s)/guardian(s) and students prior to each concert.

CONCERT ARRIVAL TIME

Call time for concerts will be announced in rehearsal and by email prior to the concert. Arrival times are generally 1 to 2 hours prior to the concert start time to allow for pre-concert warm-up and in some cases (typically at the session 2 concert) photography.

CONCERT DRESS CODE

PYO employs a dress code to allow our audiences to focus on the performance of the music without distraction. Uniformity of appearance contributes to the overall professional presentation of the group. All students are expected to wear clean, pressed garments in “Concert Black” (all black). Clothing should be solid black without any pattern or ornamentation (e.g., bows, sequins, etc.). No metallic or light-colored buttons. No sheer fabrics. Necklines on ladies’ clothing should be modest. Accessories should be minimal and not distracting.

Ladies:

- Black top with black skirt or pants (no shorts or jeans) OR black dress
- Black shoes
- Black stockings/nylons if wearing a skirt or dress
- Minimum length requirements for dresses and skirts
 - Knee length for viola, violin, and bass players
 - Calf length for cello players

Gentlemen:

- Black collared shirt
- Black pants (no shorts or jeans)
- Black shoes
- Black suit jacket (optional)

PROFESSIONAL PHOTOS

Professional photos are typically taken during the dress rehearsal on the day of the session 2 concert. Concert dress is required for group photos (see Concert Dress Code). Group photos will be used for PYO marketing, archives, website, and Facebook. Details regarding individual photos, orders, etc. will be communicated to parent(s)/guardian(s) and students prior to the session 2 concert.

ORCHESTRA MUSIC

It is the responsibility of each student to have his or her music at every rehearsal. Students should not rely on their stand partner to bring music to rehearsal. Markings to original (not copied) music should be made neatly and legibly with no. 2 pencil only. Original music that has been marked in anything other than no. 2 pencil will be considered damaged. Students will be charged the full cost of replacement for any lost or damaged original music. All original music must be turned in on concert days following the conclusion of the performance.

INSTRUMENT LIABILITY

All PYO members are responsible for their own instrument. Lost, stolen or damaged instruments (or instrument accessories) are not the responsibility of PYO. Students should never leave instruments or bows unattended where they might be accidentally damaged. PYO strongly urges parent(s)/guardian(s) to check with their family insurance agent regarding instrument insurance.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Students should not leave personal belongings or items of value unattended, particularly in public areas or at concerts. PYO is not responsible for stolen or lost articles.

REJOINING PYO AFTER LEAVING

If a student chooses to leave PYO during the season for any reason other than a medical/family crisis, they will not be allowed to rejoin the organization the following season. Students may re-audition for PYO after they have sat out for one (1) full season.

DISMISSAL POLICY

Respectful, courteous behavior is expected from every member of PYO. Behavior deemed detrimental to the PYO organization and will not be tolerated and will result in dismissal from the program.

Reasons for dismissal from PYO include, but are not limited to:

1. Disruptive behavior
2. Harassment
3. Theft
4. Assault
5. Drug or alcohol possession or use
6. Excessive/unexcused absences or tardiness
7. Concert absence

Students demonstrating disruptive behavior or who have excessive absences or tardiness will receive an official written warning from PYO and be given a reasonable time frame in which to improve their behavior. Students who are dismissed from PYO will receive official written notification. No refund will be granted to any student who is dismissed from the PYO organization. The Conductor retains the authority to dismiss any student from a single rehearsal without warning.

MR. MICHAEL MONTERO, MUSIC DIRECTOR & CONDUCTOR, POCONO YOUTH ORCHESTRA



Michael Montero began playing the violin at age eleven in his native New York City. He attended the Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music, Art and Performing Arts in Manhattan and participated in the Manhattan School of Music preparatory division. Mr. Montero received a BA in music from Rutgers University where he studied under Matthew Reichert.

Mr. Montero served as the Music Director of the Auburn Chamber Orchestra in Auburn, New York. He was the former concertmaster of the Onondaga Civic Symphony Orchestra (Syracuse, NY) and held that post for six years. Mr. Montero was the music director of the Onondaga Youth String Ensemble, a string orchestra that he founded in 2005, for both middle and high school students.

After graduation, Michael taught instrumental music in both public and private

schools in New Jersey and New York while studying violin repair and restoration with his beloved mentor, Thomas Cox. In 2003, Mr. Montero opened his first shop and spends most of his time as a luthier servicing clients at his two shops, Montero Violins, located in Emmaus and Stroudsburg. He also has a private lesson studio at both locations where he teaches violin and viola. Mr. Montero has been playing violin with the Moravian University Orchestra since he moved to the Lehigh Valley in 2011 where is he Concertmaster. In his free time, he enjoys hiking and traveling with his family.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PYO's Board of Directors is composed of parents and community members working to support the mission of PYO to educate and inspire young musicians through the pursuit of excellence in musical performance. PYO board meetings are held 5-6 times per year, typically via Zoom. New members welcome. The Board of Directors may be contacted at board@pocono-youth-orchestra.org.

Current Board of Directors:

James Burke, President & Treasurer
Brian Custard, Vice-President
Christina Schoeppner, Secretary
Elizabeth Manhart, Member
Jennifer Horvath, Member

Previous Directors:

Judy Nutaitis
Forest Cavalier III
Joseph Kondisko
Georgia's Stylianides
Karen Stylianides
Jennifer White
Julie Rubinho
Betsy Buzelli-Clarke
Tricia Bruegel
Jerry Geiger

Karen Geiger
Neicy Rubin
Joseph L. Snyder
Marie Snyder
Deborah Prince
Nancy Reed
Joseph A. Snyder
Lisa Snyder
Suzanne Anderson
Jean Bohemia

James Maloney
Marina Moroney
Randy Porte
Diane Rostock
Luis Vidal