

ALASKA YOUTH ORCHESTRAS



2023-2024

SPRING CELEBRATION

Featuring the Anchorage Youth Symphony with performances by AYO's Symphony School Ensembles

Maestro Bruce Wood, Ph.D., Music Director

Saturday 🎵 **May 4, 2024** 🎵 **7:00 pm**
Atwood Concert Hall

Sponsored by: **ConocoPhillips**
Alaska

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- Albert Einstein

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ALASKA YOUTH ORCHESTRAS

COACHES

ANCHORAGE YOUTH SYMPHONY

Nina Bingham*, 1st violin
Katie Wasko-Klink, 2nd violin
Nancy Darigo, viola
Brett Lindsay*, cello
Avalon Lee, double bass
Laura Koenig, flute
Emily Weaver, oboe

Sandra Cox, clarinet
Kyle Noonan, bassoon
Evan Hagen*, horn
Sean Evanick, trumpet
Bill Klemm, low brass
Kade Bissell, percussion
Joanna Mayer*, harp

SYMPHONY SCHOOL

Marie Nielson*, violin/viola
Brooke Wood, cello/bass
Brad Hamilton, winds/brass
Kade Bissell, percussion
Joanna Mayer*, harp

AFTER SCHOOL MUSIC

Heidi Herbert-Lovern*
Brett Lindsay*
Kyle Lindsey

Brett Lindsay, Camp Fire AK
Liaison*

CHAMBER MUSIC

Dr. Miriam English Ward ~ Brad Hamilton
Evan Hagen ~ Bill Klemm

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AYO Volunteers ~ Anne Connors & Sang Schirard (AYO Parent Reps.)



AYO SPRING COMMUNITY CONCERT

*Featuring performances by chamber music ensembles
from the Anchorage Youth Symphony
and Symphony School!*

SUNDAY, MAY 5, 2024, 3:00 PM

*at The Nave (3502 Spenard Rd)
Free Admission*

Chamber Music is a new AYO program this season! Participants work together in small ensembles (duos, trios, quartets, and quintets) to learn new music and further develop their ensemble playing skills. The program is led by Dr. Miriam English Ward.

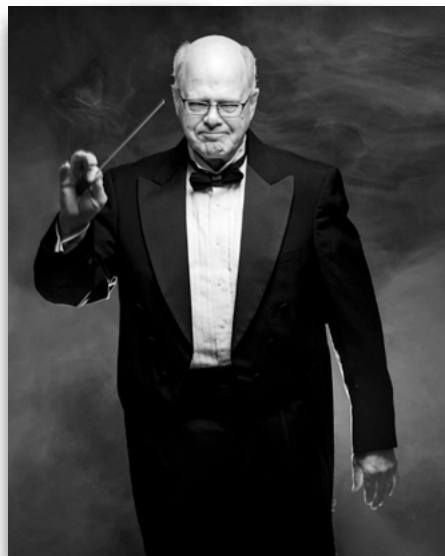
To learn more about joining a chamber music group next season, contact the AYO Office!



BIOGRAPHY

MAESTRO BRUCE WOOD, PH.D.

Dr. Bruce Wood was appointed Music Director of Alaska Youth Orchestras in July of 2021. Dr. Wood was the founding Music Director of the Youth Orchestras of Lubbock, Texas while also serving on the faculty of Texas Tech University. From 2014 to 2021 Dr. Wood was the Director of Fine Arts for the Anchorage School District.



Dr. Wood received a bachelor's degree in music education from Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa and his master's and doctorate degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Dr. Wood has taught in public school settings for eleven years and at the university level for over twenty-five years. He has been published by the American String Teacher Journal, Strings Magazine, and GIA publications.

A cellist and singer, Dr. Wood has been a member of the Alaska Chamber Singers. He has also conducted a number of the performances of the Anchorage Community Chorus Messiah. Dr. Wood's wife, Brooke, works for the Anchorage Museum.



ALASKA YOUTH ORCHESTRAS PROGRAMS

ANCHORAGE YOUTH SYMPHONY



Providing high school and college age musicians with a low-cost, professional performance experience.

Funded in part by a generous grant from the Atwood Foundation.

SYMPHONY SCHOOL



Providing low-cost, low barrier teaching ensembles and classes for youth musicians in grades 4-12.

Funded in part by the Richard L and Diane M Block Foundation.

AFTER SCHOOL MUSIC



Providing free music education and inspiration to hundreds of future musicians in partnership with Camp Fire Alaska.

Funded in part by ConocoPhillips Alaska, The Carr Foundation, the Alaska State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Rasmuson Foundation.

A NOTE FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

Welcome to our final concert for the 2023-24 season! On behalf of the AYO Board of Directors, thank you so much for joining us tonight to celebrate an amazing year of music.

This is the farewell concert for our Music Director, Dr. Bruce Wood. From the deepest months of the pandemic to the start of Symphony School to this excellent program tonight, Dr. Wood has been invaluable and energizing for the organization. We thank him for his vision and passion, and wish him all the best in his (second) retirement!



Thanks also to our staff who keep rehearsals and the organization running smoothly, the coaches who give so much of their time and talent, and all our wonderful volunteers. Most of all, thank you to our musicians and their families, without whom none of this would be possible.

Good luck to our graduating seniors, and to everyone else, I'm looking forward to seeing you next year!

Nate Berry
Board President, AYO alum ('05-'09)



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LIBBRECHT FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP



The Libbrecht Family Scholarship, provided by Marcella Libbrecht and the Libbrecht Family, gives the gift of music to a qualified Anchorage Youth Symphony violinist each season. In addition to a tuition scholarship, the recipient will have use of a violin donated by the Libbrecht family throughout the season.

Tangyu and Marcella Libbrecht have supported AYO throughout the years through their generous service and contributions. Each of their 4 children are Anchorage Youth Symphony alumni and Tangyu served as AYO Board President for 7 years. This scholarship continues their family's commitment to AYO.

The Libbrecht Family Scholarship is open for applications for violinists accepted to the 2024-25 Anchorage Youth Symphony season. Contact the AYO office for more information.



A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Thank you for joining us for our Spring Celebration Concert, in beautiful Atwood Concert Hall! What a treat to gather tonight in celebration of our young musicians. I am so proud of everyone's hard work this year, and could not have asked for a more rewarding first season at AYO!

I would like to share my sincere thanks with Maestro Bruce Wood for his partnership this season, and for all that he has brought to AYO during his tenure. His care and dedication to our young musicians are an inspiration, and he will be greatly missed! I look forward to celebrating his concluding performance tonight with the Anchorage Youth Symphony.

Thank you to our fantastic AYO team—Bruce, Zach, Evan—and to our musician coaches for their dedicated work this year. Our performances are but a fleeting window into the tremendous work that happens at AYO week after week. Thank you also to our many partners and supporters in Anchorage and beyond! Your support and inspiration keep the music playing.

After tonight, we look onward to our 2024-25 Season! Anchorage Youth Symphony auditions are due May 13, and Symphony School will resume at the start of the school year. To our returning and prospective musicians, best of luck with your auditions and screenings! We look forward to seeing you in the Fall.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "Pierre Derycz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "D".

Pierre Derycz
Executive Director



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A NOTE FROM OUR MUSIC DIRECTOR

In 2021, auditions for AYS numbered sixty-one for one orchestra. Now, three years later, one hundred sixty-three musicians in three orchestras will take the stage. This transformation is the work of a very dedicated team, including the AYO Board of Directors, Executive Director Pierre Derycz, former Executive Director Denise Brown-Chythlook, Assistant Conductor Evan Hagen, all our coaches as well as supportive private teachers and school ensemble directors in our community. To work with all these groups has been a great privilege, and I retire as music director feeling as though good work has been done, and fine music made.



The first time I found myself in front of an orchestra was as a conducting student in Cambridge, England, fifty years ago this month. I have enjoyed this life of teaching and conducting immensely. After eleven years of public school teaching, twenty-six years of working in higher education, seven years as an arts administrator here in Anchorage, and working with four youth symphony programs, it is time to let others “have a go”. I am deeply grateful and thankful for a life led in music education.

Bruce Wood



SYMPHONY SCHOOL ENSEMBLES

PRELUDE:

VIOLIN 1

Ruth Leman
Concertmaster
Lillian Beals
Julia Clark
Jessica Westley
Hanna Lundebye
Nolan Phelps
Keira Fowler

VIOLIN 2

Fiona Salao
Principal
Nyle Brown
Vanessa Vakulich
Isaac Leman
Marcelo Whited
Jacqueline Parker
Bea Besh Barber
Ellouise Peterson

VIOLIN 3

Ella Guzik
Principal
Isabella Tran
Emily Mott

CELLO

Primrose Ward
Principal
Zynna Comeau
Henry Deisseroth
Harriet Fortt

BASS

Elliot Olson
Principal
Felicia Allen
Lyra Brosius

OVERTURE:

VIOLIN 1

Sebastian Terry
Concertmaster
Hannah Kim
Caffrey Heyman
Alejandra Choi
Elizabeth Harris
Jacob Lavarias
Micah Holsopple
Willa Moberly

VIOLA

Cadence Church
Principal
Claire Cartee
Emma Dougherty
Auda Bernier

FLUTE

Carinna Clark
Principal
Sarah Benton

TRUMPET

Samuel Erickson
Principal

OBOE

Adria Myers
Principal
Maria Witmer

TROMBONE

David Schreyer
Principal

CELLO

Adrian Cryan
Principal
Anna Kanyer
Lily Bohman
Katrina Nelson
Nizoni Lommel
Eva Good
Elvine Lee
Lilly Jeppesen
Caden Grunst
Caedmon Johnson
Ava Lundebye
Peyton Rogers

CLARINET

Kaleigh Heyman
Principal
Rena Tokita
Alexandria Myers
Zachary Day

TUBA/BARIT.

Logan Williams
Principal
Deenise Lucero

VIOLIN 2

Olivia Lessens
Principal
Ethan Swartz
Amy Stockly
Isabella Schirard
Sofia Amalia Pennino
Makenzie Patzke
Reishean Hidalgo
Amelia Ellison
Andrew Deisseroth
Clinton Brown IV
Preston Paulk
Aiden Gutierrez
Susan Yang

BASS

Rienzi Witmer
Principal
Samuel Temiz

BASSOON

Rania White
Principal

PERCUSSION

Anya McLaughlin
Principal
John Bazin

HORN

Zoe McDonagh
Principal

PIANO

John Bazin
Principal

HARP

Chloe Hayner
Rena Tokita

ANCHORAGE YOUTH SYMPHONY

VIOLIN 1

Benjamin Strauss
Concertmaster
Zoe Burtch
Kestrel Wigglesworth
Rania White
Ingrid Berryhill
Angel Yang
Amber Snelling
Ethan Saephan
Svea Harvey
Alex Walukiewicz
Caleb Miller
Ellie Lang
Madison Chaitoff
Reine Soule
Isaac Dodge*
Nina Bingham**
Katie Wasko-Klink**

VIOLIN 2

Sarah Kim
Principal
Bryce Herda
Bailey Hamilton
Dylan Beals
Rebekah Renner
Aurora Panilo
Bruno Bookman
Ethan Ivey
Nicholas Goetz
Harris Anderson
Coal Flint
Catalina Whited
Robert Calivo

VIOLA

Amira Ball
Principal
Kyler Stafford
Gabriel Novero
Willow Wielechowski
Tália Tovar
Nina Geist
Eden Rhoades
Fisher Lajoie
Breanna Hester*

CELLO

Bentley Altman
Principal
Ezzy Allwright
Isaac Ward
Grant Chythlook
Donovan Mahoney
Lavinia Li
Eros Sotelo
Ruben Rhodes
Minghan Dai
Ira Libby
Kendrew Liu
Alex Osgood
Zoey Dougherty
Faith Felton*
Madison Pettey*

BASS

Violet Bowie
Principal
Ashlyn Paynter
Mary Grace Cope
Erika Dobler

FLUTE

Lena So
Principal
Amelia Swartz

OBOE

Kai Peppinger
Principal
Charlotte Fontana

CLARINET

Maximilian Erickson
Principal
Kolter Kalt
Ruby Beardsley
Gavin Baker
Abigail Spear*

BASSOON

Kaitlyn Paculba
Principal
Amaya Hammatt

HORN

Dylan Thompson
Principal
Olivia Gressett
Kai Burns
Evan Hagen**
Erik Oder**
Lolly Rader**

TRUMPET

Noah Kurth
Principal
Malachi Temiz
Isaac Diltz*
Jason Edwards**
David Hagen**

TROMBONE

Olivia Martin
Principal
Erik Rueb*
Jonathan Moore

TUBA

Kristian Nudlash-Barger*

PERCUSSION

Jack Greenwell
Principal
Isaac Klemm
Ashton Bednar

HARP

Mary Grace Cope
Principal

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PROGRAM

SYMPHONY SCHOOL ~ PRELUDE

CONDUCTOR: *EVAN HAGEN*

Allegro molto from Symphony No. 1

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart ~ *Arr. Anthony Granata*

Brandenburg Concerto No. 5

Johann Sebastian Bach ~ *Arr. Lynne Latham*

Stony Bridge Escape

Kirt Mosier

SYMPHONY SCHOOL ~ OVERTURE

Habanera from Carmen

Georges Bizet ~ *Arr. Richard Meyer*

March of the Dwarfs from Lyric Suite, Op. 54, No. 4

Edvard Grieg ~ *Arr. Michael Story*

Conducted by: Dr. Bruce Wood

The Blue Danube Waltz

Johann Strauss, Jr. ~ *Arr. Richard Meyer*

- INTERMISSION -

ANCHORAGE YOUTH SYMPHONY

CONDUCTOR: *MAESTRO BRUCE WOOD, PH.D.*

Overture to Rosamunde

Franz Schubert

The Thunderer

John Philip Sousa

Conducted by: Evan Hagen

Dances in the Canebrakes

I. Nimble Feet II. Tropical Noon III. Silk Hat and Walking Cane

Florence Price

Festive Overture, Op. 96

Dmitri Shostakovich

MUSIC NOTES

COMPILED BY

EVAN HAGEN, ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR

Allegro molto from Symphony No. 1

~ *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart* ~ Arr. *Anthony Granata*

Written when he was only 8 years old in 1764, Mozart's first symphony is full of happiness, delight, and charm at every turn. The piece opens with a bold and unison melodic statement made by the entire orchestra with beautiful harmonic suspensions; brush stroke scales; and simple eighth-note patterns, dynamics, articulations, and accidentals heard throughout.

-*Anthony Granata*

Brandenburg Concerto No. 5

~ *Johann Sebastian Bach* ~ Arr. *Lynne Latham*

The various Brandenburg concerti comprise a collection of six instrumental works. They were presented to Christian Ludwig, Margrave of Brandenburg-Schwedt in 1721. The works were taken from concerti that Bach had composed over a number of years. -*Lynne Latham*

Stony Bridge Escape

~ *Kirt Mosier*

This exciting work will evoke images of suspense and intrigue as the only escape from harm's way leads over the old Stony Bridge!

-*Kirt Mosier*

Habanera from *Carmen*

~ *Georges Bizet* ~ Arr. *Richard Meyer*

In this arrangement of one of the most recognizable arias from Bizet's opera *Carmen*, the tune is passed from section to section to keep everyone in the orchestra involved. Simple chromatic lines, changes in key signature, and frequent dynamic contrasts abound, and multiple percussion parts add to the exotic texture of what is sure to become an ensemble favorite!

-*Richard Meyer*

March of the Dwarfs from *Lyric Suite*, Op. 54, No. 4

~ Edvard Grieg ~ Arr. Michael Story

Edvard Grieg was a celebrated Norwegian composer who utilized the folk music of Norway in many of his compositions. One of Grieg's best-known works was his set of 66 pieces for piano called Lyric Pieces. Four of these pieces from Book V, Op. 54 were orchestrated by Grieg and conductor Anton Seidl and named *Lyric Suite*. "March of the Dwarfs" the fourth piece of the suite, is a distinctive and colorful work that remains one of Grieg's most recognizable melodies. -Michael Story

The Blue Danube Waltz

~ Johann Strauss, Jr. ~ Arr. Richard Meyer

Perhaps the most widely popular composer of light classical music ever, Johan Strauss Jr. wrote over 150 waltzes, bringing the form to perfection as an extended musical composition. "The Blue Danube" (the common English title of "An der schönen blauen Donau," German for "By the Beautiful Blue Danube"), was composed in 1866 and was premiered in February of 1867. It has been one of the most popular classical pieces ever since.

-Richard Meyer

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MUSIC NOTES
BY *MAESTRO BRUCE WOOD*

Overture to *Rosamunde*

Franz Schubert

Rosamunde itself was a play by Helmina von Chezy, which was panned by critics and only received two performances. While Schubert wrote incidental music for the play, the orchestral overture he used was first composed for another opera, *Alfonso and Estrella*, but then used for *Rosamunde*. The play *Rosamunde* has been lost, but the music was discovered in 1867 by Sir George Grove (founding editor of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*) and Sir Arthur Sullivan (of the Gilbert and Sullivan Operas). The overture has a dramatic introduction, followed by both an energetic and lyrical sonata movement.

The Thunderer

John Philip Sousa

John Philip Sousa's The Thunderer March was dedicated to Columbia Commandery No. 2, Knights Templar of Washington, D.C. and composed on the occasion of the Twenty-fourth Triennial Conclave of the Grand Encampment in October of 1889. This Masonic festival brought together thousands of participants from across the United States. The Thunderer is, like many of Sousa's marches, alternately festive, light, and, well, thundering. A little known fact about John Philip Sousa: although his compositions were largely for military bands, Sousa himself was a violinist.

Dances in the Canebrakes

Florence Price

Florence Price was a prolific African-American composer of symphonies, concertos, chamber compositions, pieces for solo piano and organ, and choral music. She also was a composer of art songs and made compelling arrangements of spirituals. Unfortunately, racism and gender inequality caused much of her music to be unpublished. This suite, *Dances in the Canebrakes*, was written for piano in the last year of Price's life and was subsequently orchestrated by William Grant Still. It has three movements: Nimble Feet, Tropical Noon, and Silk Hat and Walking Cane. This alternately languid and lively set is something quite new for AYS and we are pleased to present it this evening.

Festive Overture, Op. 96

Dmitri Shostakovich

Festive Overture is the second piece by Shostakovich that AYS has performed this season. During Shostakovich's career, the arts were under the scrutiny and control of the Soviet Union's Communist Party. Some of Shostakovich's compositions were harshly criticized by the communist propaganda paper *Pravda*, and Shostakovich was frequently fearful he might wind up being "taken in the night". As a result, this compositional genius was constantly treading a fine line of artistic freedom vs pleasing the State.

The Festive Overture was "safe territory" for Shostakovich as it was the opening work of the Bolshoi Theatre's celebration of the October 1917 revolution. Composed in a very short time (three days), the piece is a combination of fanfare and fast driving, galloping melodies. We hope you enjoy AYS' final piece of our 2023-24 season.

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EVAN HAGEN
AYO ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR

Evan Hagen is Assistant Conductor with Alaska Youth Orchestras, working as a conductor and brass coach with both the Anchorage Youth Symphony and AYO's Symphony School ensembles. Born and raised in Anchorage, Evan performs as a hornist with the Anchorage Symphony, Opera, and Concert Chorus orchestras, and is also a member of the Alaska Chamber Singers.



Evan's additional passions include fitness, the outdoors, and reading. Before returning to Alaska from college, Evan studied horn under Dr. Jeffrey Snedeker at Central Washington University, where he pursued interests in conducting, music history, and religious studies. In the fall of 2024, Evan will attend the University of Michigan for a Master of Music in Orchestral Conducting, where his principal teacher will be Kenneth Kiesler.



SENIOR PROFILES

BENTLEY ALTMAN, CELLO



Bentley has performed in AYS for 4 years. He is proud of having performed Lalo's Cello Concerto with AYS this Winter, getting his Eagle Scout, and reading all of Shakespeare's *Othello* without falling asleep. His favorite memory of AYO? Playing Shostakovich! Bentley loves Shostakovich!!

AMIRA BALL, VIOLA



Amira has performed in AYS for 3 years. Attending All-Northwest last winter is one of her proudest accomplishments. Amira will remember the camaraderie and passion for music that filled every AYO rehearsal and performance. Amira says that playing in AYO is a unique joy—it's about making music together and being part of something bigger than yourself.

INGRID EVE BERRYHILL, VIOLIN



Ingrid has performed in AYS for 4 years. Her proudest moment is anytime she's made someone else smile with her playing. Recalling her greatest takeaway from AYO, Ingrid points to how she made friends in an environment that she didn't think she initially belonged in.

ZOE BURTCHE, VIOLIN



Zoe has performed in AYS for 1 year. She's proud of competing in the Academic Decathlon National Competition. Her favorite part of AYO has been the opportunity to bond with peers and our conductor over beautiful music.

SENIOR PROFILES

JACK GREENWELL, PERCUSSION



Jack has performed in AYS for 1 year. He is a striving percussionist seeking higher education after high school. He wishes to start teaching Jazz around Anchorage, bringing music to Alaska.

KOLTER KALT, CLARINET



Kolter has performed in AYS for 2 years. He is proud of pursuing and sticking with the clarinet for so long. His favorite memory comes from his first year with AYO, playing Russian Sailors' Dance (by Reinhold Glière) and getting goosebumps every time!

OLIVIA MARTIN, TROMBONE



Olivia has performed in AYS for 2 years. She's proud to have been a winner of Anchorage Civic Orchestra's concerto competition, State Solo Ensemble, and to have played in many bands across the county. AYO made Olivia realize how much she loves playing in an orchestral setting, and also pushed her to take advantage of many creative opportunities, even if it was a challenge. Olivia is thankful for the many new friends and mentors she met at AYO.

JONATHAN MOORE, VIOLA & TROMBONE



Jonathan joined AYS this season as a violist, and this spring also played trombone with the orchestra! He is proud to be a National Merit Scholar Finalist, West High Riflery Captain, and West High Principal Violist and Jazz Trombonist. His greatest takeaway from AYO is adaptability, as in his one year with AYO alone Jonathan says "we've had to face many challenges."

SENIOR PROFILES

GABRIEL NOVERO, VIOLA



Gabriel has performed in AYS for 2 years. He's proud of his accomplishments on his robotics team (now the third best in the state!), singing in the all-star Swing Choir (despite no choir experience), and playing the role of Grimsby in *The Little Mermaid Jr.* Gabriel says his greatest take-away from AYO is the rigorous music he played, and how much he's grown as a musician!

REBEKAH RENNER, VIOLIN



Rebekah has performed in AYS for 2 years. She's proud of joining the orchestra, playing the piano for 12 years, and knowing American Sign Language. Her most memorable moment in AYS? "That time during sectionals practice where we were playing a really quiet part and I got the hiccups SUPER LOUD!"

RUBEN RHODES, CELLO



Ruben has performed in AYS for 3 years. He's proud of participating in All-State, the XC-Running State Team, and being a National Merit Finalist (among other achievements!) His favorite AYO memories are the concerts, because each was somehow better than the last! Ruben will continue to be inspired by the dedication and passion of the orchestra that led to this constant improvement.

EROS SOTELO, CELLO



Eros has performed in AYS for 1 year. He's proud of being the valedictorian of his graduating class, participating in the Alaska All-State orchestra, and being able to solve a Rubik's Cube. Eros says that AYO has been an awesome introduction to what being in a symphonic orchestra feels like, and it has allowed him to appreciate musical performance more!

SENIOR PROFILES

DYLAN THOMPSON, HORN



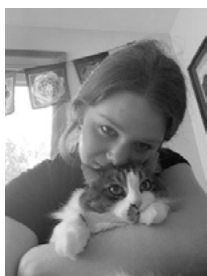
This season was Dylan's first year performing in AYS. In all his years of playing music, Dylan's greatest accomplishments have been composing his own wind ensemble piece, and receiving a first chair award at All-State. In his short time at AYO, Dylan says he's learned more about music, and while he may leave, the people he met will always stay with him in spirit.

RANIA WHITE, VIOLIN & BASSOON



Rania has performed violin in AYS for 4 years. She is proud to also play the bassoon in Symphony School's Overture ensemble, and has participated in two AYO chamber music ensembles this season! Rania will remember fondly getting to know and play with so many different musicians!

KESTREL WIGGLESWORTH, VIOLIN



Kestrel has performed in AYS for 4 years. Her favorite part of AYO has been getting the experience of playing with a big group of musicians, and spending time with friends.

ANGEL YANG, VIOLIN



Angel has performed in AYS for 1 year. She loved her time at AYO and will always cherish her memories of playing with the orchestra. Angel loves to watch cute hamster videos, practice violin, and play Roblox. She will be attending Loyola University Chicago to study psychology, and plans to continue playing violin after high school.

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Sam Erickson - Sandra Redmond
Charlotte Fontana - Linda Phillips
Nina Geist - William & Betty Lou Nanovsky
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Hanna Lundebye - Johan and Charmaine Lundebye
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Sarah Collins Burtner
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The Camm Family
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Molly Chythlook
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Mark Johnson, *in honor*
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Laura Kanyer
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Warren & Cindy Libby
Meiling Liu
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Lina Mariscal
Markel's Collision Center
Guadalupe Marroquin
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Katy Westfall Neher,
in memory of Melissa
Jayne Neher
Kate Nelson
Glen Newton & Jill Singer
Newton
Aimee O'Neil
Renee Parks, *in honor of*
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honor of Ethan Zawodny

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OUR HISTORY

The Anchorage Youth Symphony was formed in 1965 by Frank Pinkerton and has continued under the leadership of prominent local musicians and educators including Dewey Ehling, Kurt Pasch, Jeanne (Ray) Bruhn, Charles Gorsuch, Marlow Thomas, and, most recently, Linn Weeda.



In 1981 the Anchorage Youth Symphony Association began operating separately from the Anchorage School District and was granted 501(c)(3) nonprofit status. Shortly thereafter the organization adopted the name Alaska Youth Orchestras. Since then, the organization has remained an active member of the Anchorage arts community and has been a resident company of the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts since 2011.

Linn Weeda served as Music Director for 31 years, expanding the program to include coaching by local professional musicians, many who were in the youth symphony as young players. He retired in May 2021.

Maestro Bruce Wood, Ph.D., was selected as AYO's next Music Director in July 2021. Since then, Dr. Wood and Executive Director Denise Brown-Chythlook expanded AYO's education and performance programs, increasing their reach from 80 to 500 youth each year. The Anchorage Youth Symphony provides a professional performance experience for high school and college age musicians. Symphony School provides teaching ensembles for musicians from grades 4-12. AYO's most recent outreach program, After School Music (a community partnership with Camp Fire Alaska), provides a music inspiration program in an after-school care setting.

In August 2023, Pierre Derycz joined the AYO team as Executive Director, bringing a deep passion for music education and youth development. Under his leadership, AYO continues to participate in advocacy and community building efforts across the Anchorage Arts community.

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