



A Program of soundscapes

**Musician/Parent Guide  
September 2025– June 2026**

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## **General Purpose**

Peninsula Youth Orchestra is an ensemble of young musicians ranging from ages 10 to 25. It was founded by local musician Elizabeth Chapman in 1960 and in a decade grew to a full symphony orchestra. In 2020, it became an official program of Soundscapes.

PYO cultivates learning and creativity, as well as social and motivational skills. The program format is a large symphony format which allows all musicians the opportunity to make music together, regardless of whether their ability is intermediate or advanced. More advanced musicians can take leadership roles and mentor the less-experienced players in their musical development. In addition, advanced musicians will have the opportunity to grow their skills with more challenging pieces of music. PYO musicians also have the opportunity to interact with professional-level musicians and artists.

## **Soundscapes Mission**

To invest in our communities by providing immersive, engaging music-making and ensemble performance opportunities for young people to strengthen social, emotional, creative, and critical thinking skills.

## **Program Benefits**

- Development of musical skills and strengthening skills to play their instrument more accurately, more expressively, and with more musicality.
- Learning orchestral music from classical to contemporary.
- Building self-esteem, confidence, and other collaborative social skills.
- Providing opportunities to excel in leadership positions.
- Developing skills such as teamwork, concentration, prioritization, and practice.
- Supporting efficient brain processing.
- Lowering stress levels.

## **Experiences and Partnerships**

PYO's 25-26 season is made possible and is proudly sponsored by TowneBank, whose support helps sustain our mission. Additionally, performance opportunities are made possible thanks to partnerships with some of the leading arts organizations in Hampton Roads.

- **Ferguson Center for the Arts** provides free or low-cost tickets to Soundscapes to several of their performances throughout the year.

- **The Virginia Symphony Orchestra** sends some of its musicians to mentor and inspire our musicians in the spring. Our third side-by-side concert is scheduled again at the Ferguson Center.
- **The Virginia Arts Festival** sends guest artists to play and teach our musicians throughout the year. Through its daily and youth orchestra programming, Soundscapes performs approximately 30 performances utilizing musicians from all programs.
- **The Hampton Roads Philharmonic** is partnering with us for the first time this year. They will send musicians to work with our students this spring. Our first concert with the Hampton Roads Philharmonic is scheduled for May.

## **Transportation**

PYO Musicians must arrive and leave via personal transportation. There will be no bus to transport students from Carver or any other school this year.

## **Evaluations**

Evaluations are conducted at the end of May, and you will receive a progress report in June. We use this information to determine how best to support the musician's musical and social growth. These evaluations are shared in aggregate with funders and the general public; individual results are only shared with the student, their parents, or internally.

There are six areas considered when evaluating an orchestral student:

1. **Tone**
2. **Intonation/Pitch Accuracy**
3. **Rhythm/Tempo**
4. **Technique:** Articulation/releases, posture, breath/bow/stick control
5. **Expression:** Dynamics, phrasing, style
6. **Sight Reading:** Pitch/Intonation, rhythm/Tempo, expression

# PYO Calendar for 2025-2026

(Subject to Change)

Key: No Rehearsal, Performance

## September 2025

- 2 PYO Symphony Orchestra Auditions
- 3 Performance Ensemble Auditions
- 30 PYO Orientation - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. - Gildersleeve)

## October 2025

- 7 WK 1 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)  
With Parent/Student Orientation
- 14 WK 2 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)
- 21 WK 3 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)
- 28 WK 4 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)

## November 2025

- 4 Election Day (PYO No Rehearsal)
- 11 WK 5 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)
- 18 WK 6 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)
- 25 WK 7 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)

## December 2025

- 2 WK 8 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)
- 9 WK 9 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)
- 16 WK10 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)
- 21 PYO Holiday Concert (Ferguson Center)
- 23 12/23 & 12/30 Holiday Break (PYO No rehearsal)

## January 2026

- 6 WK 11 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)

- 13 WK 12 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)
- 20 WK13 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)
- 27 WK 14 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)

## February 2026

- 3 WK 15 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)
- 10 WK 16 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)
- 17 WK 17 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)
- 24 WK 18 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)

## March 2026

- 3 WK 19 PYO/VSO Dress Rehearsal (6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. - Ferguson Center)
- 4 Side by Side/VSO Concert Rehearsal (6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.), House Opens (7:00 p.m.), Performance 7:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. - Ferguson Center
- 10 WK 20 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)
- 17 WK 21 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)
- 24 WK 22 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)
- 31 WK 23 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)

## April 2026

- 4/6-4/10 Spring Break (PYO No rehearsals)
- 14 WK 24 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)
- 21 WK 25 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)
- 26 WK 26 Virginia Community Music Concert (Ferguson Center)
- 28 WK 27 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)

## May 2026

5 WK 28 PYO Rehearsal - Full Orchestra (6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Gildersleeve)

9 PYO/HRP Side-bySide Concert

19 WK 29 Evaluation/Assessment

## **Policy Regulations**

### **Financial Obligations**

The total cost per student is approximately \$2,500. For this reason, we collect household financial information. This information allows Soundscapes to apply for necessary funding and tax incentive programs. Financial information is shared in aggregate, and individual information is never shared.

The family contributes to the total cost through tuition, calculated based on a family's combined household income and the number of household members.

Families who choose not to disclose their financial income will be charged the maximum tuition of \$600.00. Tuition must be paid in full by October 1st. Students with outstanding tuition will not be able to participate.

If tuition cannot be paid by the deadline, you must speak directly with the Program Manager to arrange a reasonable payment schedule. If communication fails, Soundscapes reserves the right to discontinue services to the musician.

### **Tuition Payment**

An invoice is provided with the ability to pay directly through the Quickbooks payment portal. If paying by paper check, it should be made payable to Soundscapes/PYO, have the student's name in the memo line, and mailed to:

Soundscapes  
11712 Jefferson Ave. Ste. C #473  
Newport News, VA 23606

Tuition is non-refundable after 30 days of participation.

### **Maintain Eligibility for PYO**

Musicians must meet and adhere to the outlined requirements and expectations to continue participating in PYO. Student evaluations are ongoing and based on observation by all staff members.

### **Attendance Policy**

Maintaining regular attendance is crucial for the success of our orchestra. To ensure the best performance experience, the following guidelines apply:

- **Unexcused Absences:** Musicians with more than one unexcused absence may not be allowed to perform in that concert cycle.
- **Total Absences:** More than one absence within a concert cycle, whether excused or unexcused, may prevent participation in that concert. This decision is at the discretion of the Music Director.
- **Performance Attendance:** Attendance at all performances is mandatory. An unexcused absence from a performance may result in dismissal from the program.

We value your commitment to our orchestra and appreciate your dedication to regular attendance.

### **Excused Absences**

Absences are excusable in cases of illness or family emergency (e.g., death or hospitalization of a close family member). Please email the Program Manager as soon as it is known that you will need to miss for this reason, or immediately afterward if it is an emergency. Failure to provide notice will result in an unexcused absence.

### **Punctuality**

Early arrival to all rehearsals and concert call times is expected. Students should arrive at least 15 minutes before each rehearsal (percussionists at least 30 minutes before) to set up instruments and warm up. Tardiness disrupts the flow and focus of rehearsals. Repeated tardiness will be considered an unexcused absence.

### **Withdrawal from PYO**

We request that if a student is withdrawing, they do so at the end of a performance cycle. Families should provide at least **30 days' notice** prior to withdrawal, and this notice should be submitted directly to the PYO Manager.

### **Dismissal from the Program**

PYO reserves the right to dismiss a musician from the program due to:

- Attendance
- Non-Payment of tuition as mentioned above
- Behavioral issues such as hitting, fighting, possession of weapons, continuous disrespect.



## **End-of-Year Return:**

Returning music and folders at the end of the year is expected. A fee of \$40 will be assessed for unreturned folders.

## **Communication & Concerns**

Organized communication ensures a productive and focused environment during rehearsals and performances. Please raise your hand to ask questions during rehearsal and refrain from non-music-related conversations.

Any concerns or comments should be addressed to the PYO Program Manager.

The primary source of communication for all rehearsals, performances, and other news is through the Bloomz app. This is a downloadable application that may be found in all major phone app stores and is free. A parent and a student code will be provided to sign up.

Secondary forms of communication are:

- Emails: using the address given in the Parent #1 field on Registration form
- Phone using a phone message service, directly via phone, text,
- Traditional mail, or paper notes sent with musicians.

Therefore, we ask that provide us with the most current contact information.

Phone numbers that you may see on your Caller ID are:

- (757) 273-6178 – Main Soundscapes Office Number
- (757) 992-1496 –Westley Benson, PYO Manager

## **Program Staff and Contact Information**

PYO staff is committed to providing competent and professional training and coaching related to programming and repertoire selections.

Westley Benson, PYO Manager  
Cell: (757) 992-1496  
Email: [wbenson@soundscapeshr.org](mailto:wbenson@soundscapeshr.org)

Paul Kim, Music Director  
Email: [pkim@soundscapeshr.org](mailto:pkim@soundscapeshr.org)

### Mailing Address:

Soundscapes  
11712 Jefferson Ave. Ste. C #473  
Newport News, VA 23606

Website: [www.soundscapes.org/pyo](http://www.soundscapes.org/pyo)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/peninsulayouthorchestra](https://www.facebook.com/peninsulayouthorchestra)

YouTube: [www.youtube.com/soundscapeshr](https://www.youtube.com/soundscapeshr)

### **Placement Within the Orchestra**

Seating assignments are determined by the PYO Music Director based on:

- Initial audition
- Demonstration of ability and leadership during rehearsals and performances
- Yearly end-of-season evaluation
- Attendance record

The Music Director may alter seatings from one concert to the next at his discretion. Any student who believes a seating is unjustified may approach the Conductor in private or send a Bloomz message with a request for consideration. There will be no seating challenges.

Violinists may audition on either Violin 1 or Violin 2 music excerpts. If they wish to be considered for the Violin 1 section, then they should prepare the Violin 1 excerpts during the audition or during the end-of-year evaluation. Their choice does not guarantee their participation in their preferred section (either Violin 1 or 2).

### **Avoiding Conflicts of Interest**

PYO provides a full list of all rehearsals and performances prior to registration to help families determine if a commitment can be made to fulfill the obligations agreed upon by registering. Parents/guardians are asked to provide a list of unavoidable scheduling conflicts at the beginning of the year. The Program Manager and Music Director will review these conflicts and determine whether participation in any given concert cycle will be allowed.

### **Rehearsals and Concerts**

#### **Rehearsals**

- Peninsula Youth Orchestra rehearses at Gildersleeve Middle School: 1 Minton Dr. Newport News, 23606
- From October 7, 2025 - May 9, 2026
- Tuesdays (6:30 pm to 8:30 pm)

- PYO will not have a program on snow days, half school days, teacher in-service days, or scheduled holidays. In short, when the school is closed Soundscapes is closed (**unless notified otherwise**).

### **Appropriate Attire for Concerts:**

Wearing appropriate attire helps maintain a professional appearance. Unless otherwise specified, black concert attire is the standard for performances.

- Black dress shirt and long pants or a black blouse with either a long black skirt or dress slacks.
- Black socks and black dress shoes (heels optional).
- A black jacket and/or tie is optional.
- Shirts should be tucked in.
- Long hair should be pulled away from the face.
- Clothes should be freshly laundered and ironed.

### **Performance Hygiene**

Musicians should arrive for performances well-groomed and considerate of personal hygiene. Please avoid wearing perfume or cologne, as it may affect others around you.

### **Supervision**

All PYO participants will be under the supervision of PYO staff. Participants will be allowed to use the bathroom closest to each activity within the program site. Students must remain in the designated areas of the facilities.

### **Essential Supplies**

Bring necessary instrument supplies, such as mutes, rosin, reeds, etc.

Bring your music and a pencil to every rehearsal. While we may have backups available, it is the student's responsibility to bring their supplies to rehearsal.

### **Handle Music with Care**

Treat music and the special leather folder that the Peninsula Youth Orchestra provides with care and respect. Use a **pencil only** when marking your music. Thoughtful handling of your sheet music directly impacts the quality of our performances.

## **Expectations**

Each individual's full attendance and participation in the orchestra is crucial for the ensemble's success. Some parts are played by single musicians, and even the string sections need full participation to balance with other instruments, ensuring that all parts are heard as intended. Absences create gaps and weaken the overall sound, making it difficult for the ensemble to perform confidently. Therefore, full attendance is necessary and expected from all members.

## **Playing in Rehearsal**

Active participation is expected from all musicians during rehearsals. Please engage in playing your instrument and avoid sitting and listening without participating.

## **Engage Actively**

Actively listening and maintaining focus during rehearsals and performances is crucial for musical excellence.

## **Regular Practice**

Maintaining high musical standards through regular practice is essential for a successful performance. At least 2 hours per week of practice on the PYO orchestral music should be considered the standard, in addition to any practice for school ensembles or individual lessons. Noticeable progress between rehearsals is expected, with a focus on targeted areas from the previous rehearsal.

## **Behavior**

We strive to provide an atmosphere conducive to safety and appropriate behavior while still having fun. Proper conduct while in the program is the joint responsibility of musicians, parents, and program staff. The PYO's Manager is notified of all participant discipline matters and handles those that warrant additional attention. Please review the following with your child before the program begins:

- Proper behavior is expected at all times.
- Treat others as you would like to be treated, with kindness and courtesy.
- Communicate with words.
- Use appropriate language and gestures.
- Candy, gum, or food are not allowed in rehearsal.
- Water is the only beverage allowed in rehearsal.
- Clean up after yourself.
- Respect and listen to the PYO staff.

- Put things back where you found them.
- Respect the rights and property of others.
- Keep each other's safety in mind at all times.

### **Respect for Peers and Staff**

1. Respecting peers and staff is important for maintaining a positive and safe environment.
2. Avoiding offensive conduct is crucial for creating a respectful and inclusive atmosphere.
3. Understanding and preventing harassment of any kind is vital for the well-being of all members.
4. **Harassment of any kind will not be taken lightly or tolerated and is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program.**

### **Respect for Facilities**

Treat venue property with care and seek permission for equipment used to maintain a positive relationship with venues.

### **Venue Expectations**

Respect performance etiquette guidelines provided by the conductor to contribute to a harmonious performance.

### **Venue Courtesy**

Being respectful guests in every venue reflects well on the organization. Please keep the area clean and tidy.

### **Rehearsal Rooms**

Use rehearsal rooms appropriately to help create an organized rehearsal environment.

### **Electronic Devices**

Prioritize music over distractions by leaving electronic devices outside the rehearsal room or turning them off during rehearsals and performances.

### **No Food or Gum**

Please keep food and gum outside the rehearsal rooms or performance venues. Bottled water is acceptable during rehearsals.

At the end of rehearsal, musicians must be picked up from Gildersleeve. PYO will not provide bus transportation.

### **Non-Discrimination Policy**

Soundscapes is committed to equal opportunity in employment and education. No person at Soundscapes will be denied the opportunity for employment, education or subject to discrimination in any project, program, or activity because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, genetic information, sexual orientation, or disability.

### **Performance Ensemble**

The Soundscapes Performance Ensemble is a select group of the Peninsula Youth Orchestra. This paid ensemble is a high performing ensemble and has high time requirements, since it performs approximately 30 performances (“gigs”) per school year. The ensemble consists of up to seven musicians in total. There are five core members and two swing (or substitute) musicians. Primary auditions occur in early September and are only open to Peninsula Youth Orchestra members.

The Performance Ensemble is considered a class and is taught/coached each Wednesday afternoon/evening. Notice of the live audition will be placed on Bloomz.

Student musicians will learn nearly 60 pieces throughout the season, so sightreading is of the utmost importance.

Since the Performance Ensemble is considered a class by the Department of Labor, there are no age restrictions, but generally students are ages 14-20.

It is stressed that a flexible schedule is key, as this ensemble acts as the representative for the organization in many events. A Soundscapes administrator will be in charge of each event.

The ensemble is open to all winds, brass, strings (no double bass). Percussion members may audition to be utilized on an as needed basis. (usually playing cajon or electric drum set)

Auditions for this group are held annually.

## Signatures

We have reviewed the contents of this handbook and understand the guidelines and expectations for participation in the Peninsula Youth Orchestra. Our signatures below confirm our commitment to these standards.

Parent Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_