

NJYS PERSONNEL

David Commanday, Artistic Director
dcommanday@njys.org, 908-771-5544 x 13

Linda Onorevole Annett, Executive Director
lonorevole@njys.org, 908-771-5544 x 12

Ankush Kumar Bahl
Conductor, Youth Symphony
ankush.bahl@njys.org

Simon Lipskar
Conductor, Youth Orchestra
simon.lipskar@njys.org

Mark Gunderman
Conductor, Philharmonia
mark.gunderman@njys.org

Cynthia D. Longley
Conductor, Sinfonia
cynthia.longley@njys.org

Kristi L. Gaspari
Conductor, Preparatory String Ensemble
& Junior Strings
kristi.gaspari@njys.org

Diana Charos Reilly
Conductor, Flute Choir & Flute Forum
diana.reilly@njys.org

Kenneth Piascik
Director, Percussion Ensemble
ken.piascik@njys.org

Bryan Rudderow
Operations Manager
brudderow@njys.org, 908-771-5544 x 11

Judy Lester
Office Manager
jlester@njys.org, 908-771-5544 x 10

NJYS STUDENT HANDBOOK

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2009-2010 2009-2010 2009-2010

This handbook is intended to provide NJYS students and their families a ready guide to our policies and procedures. We hope it will help to ensure a successful and rewarding musical and personal experience for all.

Students are expected to read and understand this handbook, and to act in harmony with our principles and rules at all times.

STANDARDS & COMMITMENT

The artistic standards at NJYS are very high. Successfully meeting the challenges presented by the performance repertoire requires a commitment from our student musicians, their parents, volunteers, and our staff.

Punctual and reliable attendance is vital in achieving a high level of performance. In order to rehearse effectively, orchestra members and the conductors must be able to hear all parts. Balance can only be determined properly if everyone is present during rehearsals.

Similarly, a focused and calm rehearsal environment is very important. The concentration level of individually-rehearsed orchestra sections must not be broken by the inappropriate talking within sections not playing at that moment. Orchestra members must likewise be able to hear remarks from the podium, and conductors must be able to hear questions from orchestra members.

Respectful behavior is expected from everyone, students and staff alike.

PRIVATE LESSONS & PRACTICE

NJYS provides professional training for young musicians, and aspires to the highest musical standards. In order to maintain these standards, **each member is expected to receive regular private lessons**. The artistic staff may be in contact with private teachers if and when it can be helpful to the student's learning. Failure to take lessons may result in dismissal.

Members must practice their orchestral and ensemble parts at home in order to be prepared for each rehearsal, and may be asked to play their parts alone or in small groups during rehearsal.

SCHOOL PARTICIPATION

NJYS expects all members to participate in their school's music program when and however possible. This represents an important opportunity for enrichment of the student's school experience, and reflects our NJYS support of the school music program. Should conflicts arise between NJYS and a school music schedule, NJYS will make every effort to accommodate.

often plays it one octave below the firsts. In some music the second violins, like the violas, carry the 'inner' part which is part of the harmonic framework for the more obvious melody in other sections of the orchestra. This does not make this part less important. In fact, in our opinion the quality of an orchestra can most surely be measured by the strength and quality of the inner voices, which lend richness and beauty to the entirety, or which when played weakly can fatally undercut the overall intonation and quality of the performance.

A violinist may be assigned to the second part precisely because his or her ability is needed to add to the strength and beauty of this part. Another reason can be that the player is not yet as secure playing very high on the instrument as in the lower positions. In neither case is there any shame or demotion to be inferred or interpreted by the assignment. Our orchestras can only be as good as their second violins and violas!

Obviously, this principle applies to every section, and to every individual.

Finally, a note about seating within string sections. It is not possible to evaluate a group of 8 to 24 strings and then order them absolutely accurately according to their proficiency and ability. Each player has relative strengths and weakness – technical ability, intonation, tone quality and size, rhythmic pulse, and musicianship (sight-reading ability is part of this), are among the elements we evaluate in a player's performance.

Our goal is to balance these strengths and weaknesses within the section, so that each player's weakness is supported by a neighbor's strength, and vice-versa. To put the perceived best players in 'the front' (i.e. closest to the conductor) and the perceived weakest in 'the back' is to get the worst performance from the section, and not the best. So, regardless of the conductor's evaluation of the individual players, the performance seating order within string sections will not reveal a hierarchy of ability. We realize that this is different from many other situations, including Regions and All-State, but this arrangement is in our view much better for an ongoing symphonic program.

Above all, competition among students for the conductor's 'favor' in the form of assignments is counter-productive and unwelcome at NJYS. We want students competing with **themselves** to raise their own levels of performances. While in our orchestra, **every** player is a valued musician, who belongs, in the deepest sense of the word, to an artistic team.

foster every player's musical and personal growth, and to achieve performing success for the orchestra in the concert. Assignments will always represent the conductor's best judgments to balance the two values: the individual and the common good.

Evaluation of progress is important for both students and parents. The first and best resource for this evaluation is the private teacher. However our conductors can and will offer you their perspective periodically as well. It is a mistake, however, to interpret parts assignments as the evaluation. Conductors will do their best to distribute musical leadership opportunities and responsibilities as indicated above – giving opportunities for challenge but also for success. Solo and/or principal parts are not necessarily awarded equally to all, but as and when players show they are ready to rise to the challenges of each part.

Music is a performing art which is fundamentally based on aspiring to excellence, and value judgments of quality in performance cannot nor should be avoided. Unlike sports, in which a stopwatch or the finish line make comparisons easy and undisputable, judgments in the arts are by definition subjective. Such evaluation is made all the time by performers and audiences alike, and our conductors must do their best to make comparative evaluations of the students' performances. These evaluations will always be entirely free of any extraneous factors or bias. No student will be judged for personality, private teacher, school district, clothing style, gender or race, hair color, or any other such irrelevant trait. Our conductors are dedicated to the welfare of **all** the students, which means that every student is a favorite.

We cannot guarantee that every student and every parent will agree with every evaluation, or every part assignment, but we will guarantee this: **every evaluation and every educational assignment and decision will be free of personal bias, and guided only by musical and teaching expertise.** Each decision will be our very best and sincere effort to do right by all of our students.

Seating of string players within sections, principal roles, and assignment of violins into the two sections within the orchestra deserve special discussion.

Our society almost makes a cliché of the expression, “playing second fiddle.” This is a symptom of the unfortunate assumption that the second violin parts are inferior and less important in some way. This is not so. In most orchestra music the second violin part does carry the prominent melody less often than the first part, and when it does carry the melody it

INSTRUMENT LIABILITY

All NJYS students/families are responsible for their instruments. Lost, stolen or damaged instruments (or instrument accessories) are not the responsibility of NJYS. NJYS strongly encourages all members to have their instruments insured. Should any damage occur to your instrument while you are participating in a NJYS activity, please notify a NJYS staff member immediately.

MUSIC AND FOLDERS

To meet requirements of federal copyright laws, students participating in NJYS ensembles may be entrusted with original pieces of music. This policy places even greater responsibility on the students to care for each piece of music performed throughout the season. Students will be billed to replace any lost or damaged music, including non-original parts and folders. Failure to address replacement costs will jeopardize the student's continued participation in NJYS programs. Any questions may be directed to the ensemble's Key Volunteer Librarian, or to the NJYS Office

EXPECTATIONS AND RULES OF BEHAVIOR

1. Students should always bring a pencil, music stand (all parts clearly labeled with student's name) and their music folder to rehearsals and performances.
2. Extra music supplies (strings, resin, reeds, etc.) should be brought to rehearsal also. All string students are expected to keep a complete set of replacement strings with them at all times, in case of breakage.
3. Music may only be marked with pencil, and it will often be necessary to do so!
4. Students may be allowed to bring a bottle of water with a spill-proof cap to rehearsals, provided they are considerate and respectful of this privilege.
5. Students are expected to be disciplined and respectful of fellow students and conductor, and careful of their own and others' instruments at all times.
6. Behaviors that are not acceptable during rehearsals include:
 - a. Unnecessary talking
 - b. Running and horse-play
 - c. Eating (including chewing gum) and drinking (other than water in a spill-proof container)

- d. Playing games (electronic or otherwise)
 - e. Wearing hats, headphones or sunglasses
 - f. Sound recording without prior permission
 - g. Disruptive playing of instruments
 - h. Rudeness to fellow students, staff, volunteers, or parents
 - i. Use of listening devices such as I-Pods and MP3 players
 - j. Texting or using other mobile devices
7. Cell phones must be turned off and stored in instrument cases during all NJYS rehearsals, performances, and activities.
 8. Students are not permitted to leave the NJYS Music Center during breaks. Departure from NJYS except in the custody of immediate family members (Parents, Grandparents, or parentally-authorized siblings) is prohibited, unless otherwise specifically authorized in writing by a parent.
 9. Clothing should reflect respect for the situation and allow for effective playing.
 10. Smoking or the use of illegal drugs or alcohol is not allowed at NJYS at any time.

REHEARSAL ETIQUETTE

Every student should help to maintain a good working atmosphere, which requires QUIET BETWEEN PLAYING to allow instructions to be heard: no talking, playing, reading, or game-playing.

FOLLOW DIRECTIONS immediately and try your best to play as instructed. If directions cannot be followed due to a problem with your instrument, or if you are unable to perform for whatever reason, wait for an appropriate moment to raise your hand and inform the conductor, or quietly exit the rehearsal room and seek assistance from a volunteer or staff member.

BE RESPECTFUL of the conductor, fellow players, their instruments, the staff, and the building and equipment. This includes cleaning up after yourself.

Put forth your BEST EFFORT.

Always BE PREPARED: know your part, be warmed-up, and be alert.

BE FOCUSED; do not be a distraction. Students should only leave the room during the rehearsal when absolutely necessary.

Upon arrival, students are instructed to check-in with the Attendance Coordinator and check the bulletin board for announcements. ***Students must be in their seats, warming up and ready to play their instruments, 5-minutes before the rehearsal begins.*** Prompt return from rehearsal breaks is also essential. Regular late arrival to rehearsals will lead to a corrective conversation between student, parent and conductor, and if it is chronic, may jeopardize continued membership in NJYS.

Exceptions to the Attendance Requirements

The allowance (with written notification) for 2 absences from non-mandatory rehearsals per CP is intended to virtually eliminate the need to authorize an exception. Therefore, it is envisioned that the need for a student to request such an exception to the Attendance Policy will be rare. If a serious crisis or an unavoidable situation arises, the student may request that an exception to the Attendance Policy be made. The procedure for requesting such an exception requires completing an Attendance Notification Form and submitting it to the Attendance Coordinator at the earliest possible date. The student's pattern of attendance will be one factor considered in determining whether to issue the exception, and in determining the nature of any conditions that NJYS might require regarding the student's continued participation. The decision of the conductor and Artistic Director will be final. An example of a situation that could warrant an exception to the Attendance Requirements is an illness requiring hospitalization of an immediate family member.

Holidays

Rehearsals missed for religious observations are considered excused absences. Please submit an Absence Notification Form signed by a parent as soon as possible, but at least 2 weeks prior to the event.

PARTS ASSIGNMENTS

There are many individual parts to be played within each orchestral work; they are not identical, and they are not always equal in difficulty or prominence. Therefore different members of the orchestra have different roles to play. For a successful performance, every part must be played excellently, and the quality of the whole is achieved through and limited by the quality of every single part.

At NJYS parts will be assigned by the conductor of each ensemble according to each player's abilities and current level of performance. In making the assignments the conductor will seek to serve two goals: to

ATTENDANCE POLICY: REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

Concert Period (CP) Attendance

Each student is allowed 2 absences from non-mandatory rehearsals during each CP. They are to be used only for unavoidable situations, such as schedule conflicts, serious illness or other emergency situations. More than 2 absences within a CP may result in a change in a student's musical assignment (part or seating) or not being allowed to perform in the concert affected. Such decisions will be made by the conductor in consultation with the Artistic Director. Unexcused late arrivals or early departure of 15 minutes or more will be recorded as a half-absence. Extensive absenteeism in a second consecutive Concert Period will result in a review of the student's continued membership in NJYS, and the student and family will be invited to a discussion with the conductor and Artistic Director.

Notification

Students are required to submit an Absence Notification Form signed by a parent as soon as possible, but at least 2 weeks in advance, for any scheduled absence, including late arrival or early departure exceeding 15 minutes. For last-minute unavoidable situations that arise the parent must call the Attendance Coordinator (phone number to be provided) to notify the Coordinator of the absence. If the unavoidable situation occurs after 4:00 PM and before the scheduled time on the day of the rehearsal, the parent should also call the NJYS Operations Manager at 908-771-5544, ext. 11 or Office Manager at ext. 10; in such a case the parent must submit a signed Absence Notification Form immediately after the absence occurs. Failure to submit the Absence Notification Form at least 2 weeks prior to any scheduled absence is not merely impolite - it is a breach of each student's responsibility to their conductor and fellow students of NJYS. Absence Notification Forms for long-planned absences, such as family vacations and school concerts, should be submitted as soon as the student and parents become aware of the conflict.

Concert Performance

Attendance at all scheduled concerts is mandatory. Students will be excused from concerts only under compelling circumstances. Unexcused absence from a concert may jeopardize continuing membership in NJYS and subsequent eligibility to re-audition to return.

Rehearsal Arrival/Sign-in Procedure

Students are required to arrive for rehearsals at least 15-minutes before the scheduled start time of their first activity.

DISCIPLINE

NJYS maintains a tiered discipline system for misbehavior at any rehearsal, performance or other NJYS activity.

1. Student receives a verbal warning or reprimand from conductor, coach or staff member.
2. Student receives a reprimand which is communicated to parents by phone, e-mail, or letter.
3. Parent Conference - student and parents meet with NJYS staff.
4. Suspension - student will be suspended from NJYS activities for at least one Concert Period.
5. Dismissal.

Please be aware that if students are observed smoking or with intoxicating beverages or illegal drugs at any NJYS event, it will result in their immediate dismissal from NJYS, and all tuition and fees paid to NJYS will be forfeited. Any behavior which endangers or otherwise violates another person may be cause for immediate dismissal.

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Visitors may not attend rehearsals without prior permission from the conductor.
2. If the need arises to speak with a conductor at length, please call or e-mail the Operations Manager to set up an appointment. Conductors will accommodate your request for a meeting at a mutually agreeable time.
3. Please observe the following driving pattern when at the NJYS building:
 - Please enter via the driveway closest to the A&P supermarket and exit via the driveway closest to South Street.
 - Please drive slowly and considerately.
 - Please pick your child up promptly at the end of rehearsal.
 - Students are required to wait inside the NJYS Music Center; the parking lot is not a safe place to congregate.
4. In the event rehearsal is cancelled, NJYS will publicize the closing as follows:
 - on the www.njys.org homepage
 - via a message on the NJYS office telephone line: 908-771-5544
 - by phone chain
 - by email

5. Rehearsals cancelled due to snow will be announced by 2pm on the day of the rehearsal.
6. Directions to NJYS and concerts sites may be found on the web site, www.njys.org.
7. Students who are 18 years old are considered members of NJYS ensembles, and are expected to adhere to all NJYS rules and regulations.

COMMUNICATION

NJYS sends a weekly email newsletter to its students and families entitled "This Week at NJYS" that includes important information related to rehearsals, concerts, and activities. Please be sure to update NJYS should you make any changes to the email address(es) you supplied at the start of the season. If you do not have email access, please call NJYS Operations Manager, Bryan Rudderow, at 908-771-5544 x 11 to arrange for an alternate manner of communication.

There are times when materials are sent home with students. Please remember to ask your child weekly if there are documents for review.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: OVERVIEW

NJYS is committed to providing an outstanding music education and performance experience to all of our students. Absences, late arrivals, or early departures detract from the learning environment. They disrupt the individual student's learning progress and have a negative impact on the performance level of the entire orchestra. Each student musician is expected to attend, arrive promptly to, and remain throughout all rehearsals. Perfect attendance is the recommended goal for each NJYS student, although we recognize some absences may be unavoidable. Significant chronic or flagrant disregard of our attendance policies may result in a student's dismissal from NJYS without tuition refund.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: DEFINITIONS

Concert Period

A Concert Period (CP) is the time frame during which a concert program is rehearsed in preparation for a performance. It begins with the first rehearsal and culminates with the performance. Each of the orchestras

and ensembles has either 2 or 3 Concert Periods each season. Note: The annual Play-a-thon is a mandatory special concert involving all of our ensembles that will be fit within the context of the main Concert Periods.

Rehearsal

A rehearsal is any scheduled session, including a full ensemble rehearsal or a sectional coaching session.

Mandatory Rehearsals

The last 2 rehearsals immediately preceding a concert are mandatory. Mandatory means you must attend. Absence from these pre-concert Mandatory Rehearsals is allowed only for emergencies, or for school, Regional, or All-State concerts. Unauthorized absence from Mandatory Rehearsals may result in the student's dismissal from performing the concert or other disciplinary action at the discretion of the conductor and the Artistic Director.

Absence Notification Form

The Absence Notification Form captures the reason for a student's intended absence from a rehearsal necessitated by an unavoidable situation (such as a scheduled school music concert in which the student performs) that conflicts with any NJYS rehearsal. This form must be completed and signed by a parent and submitted to the Attendance Coordinator as soon as the conflict is known. We expect students and their families to make every effort to inform us of such schedule conflicts at the earliest opportunity, but no later than 2 weeks prior to any scheduled absence. The conductors and office staff need this information in advance to make rehearsal plans and minimize the negative effects of the absence. Under rare circumstances the family may be asked to bring the student's music part to a crucial rehearsal, should no other copy be available.

Attendance Coordinators, Office Manager, and Operations Manager

The Key NJYS Volunteer responsible for managing the attendance records of all NJYS students is the Attendance Coordinator for each of the orchestras and ensembles. Students and parents should make sure they know their Attendance Coordinator and how to contact him or her. When the Attendance Coordinator cannot be reached, either Judy Lester, Office Manager (extension 10), or Brian Rudderow, Operations Manager (extension 11), can be contacted. In such cases they can receive calls or messages regarding attendance, and will relay information and questions to the Attendance Coordinator, conductor, and/or the Artistic Director.