



# Student Handbook

Rev. B

## **Mission Statement**

The Billings Youth Orchestra and Chorale (BYOC) provides the opportunity for individual growth of musically talented youth through training and performance of the highest quality. The BYOC endeavors to develop pride and confidence in young people from all cultural backgrounds through individual musical achievements and to instill values and discipline through musical experiences. The BYOC aspires to perpetuate support for professional classical music by enriching local culture and developing future musicians for major orchestras.



## The Orchestras

The Billings Youth Orchestra and Chorale consists of four separate string ensembles and two chorales. They are: Preludio Strings, Concert Orchestra, Young Artists, Repertory Orchestra, Cantate and Choralaires. Except for Preludio Strings, members, including the chorales, are selected through formal auditions. Thus, orchestral placement is determined by ability rather than age. Musicians in grades four through college are eligible to audition for any of the three upper orchestras. (Exceptions for younger musicians may be made after discussions with parents, private teacher and conductor.) All six ensembles rehearse weekly from September through early April. Performances include two major concerts, as well as several outreach programs and overnight tours. Registration information and the current schedule can be found online at [billingsyouthorchestra.org](http://billingsyouthorchestra.org).

**Preludio Strings** is designed for young string musicians with approximately one year of playing experience and minimal note reading ability. In this "pre-orchestra" training ensemble, participants learn the basics of performing in an orchestra, such as how to sit while playing, following the baton and playing basic mixed ensemble repertoire. There is also focus on developing music reading skills to ensure future orchestral success. Private lessons are recommended.

**Concert Orchestra** Members have generally played for two or more years, have developed note reading skills, and play with good tone and intonation. The repertoire selected for this ensemble generally remains in first position, although advanced beginners will be challenged to play some parts in higher positions.

**Young Artists** Members have generally played for two or more years, have developed note reading skills and play with good tone and intonation. The repertoire selected for this ensemble ranges from first position to some parts in higher positions. These musicians will be developing or using vibrato and playing more complicated key signatures and rhythms.

**Repertory Orchestra** performs just that: standard string orchestra repertoire. Members play at high technical and musical levels (the audition requirements are the same as for the Montana All-State Orchestra). Mentor musicians will be brought in on a regular basis to provide varied insight into performing at a professional level.

**Cantate Chorale** is our beginning vocal group comprised of young male and female voices. Since its inception, this group has provided age appropriate instruction and performance opportunity to students in their early formative years.

**Chorales** This vocal group is comprised of accomplished vocalists that possess outstanding sight reading skills and range in age from 13 to 18 years of age.



**Auditions** are carried out to assure that the students are placed into the proper orchestra or chorale that fits their talent and current skill level. Placement in a specific orchestra or in the chorale is done solely at the discretion of the conductors and determined by ability

rather than by age. Seat placement will be determined solely by the conductors. Individual sections will NOT be arranged in order of descending ability. Seat assignments will be done in such a manner so as to present the most musically mature and stable sections and may be changed at any time.

## **Commitment and Attendance**

The Billings Youth Orchestra strives for high standards of musical excellence, and we hope our musicians consider membership an honor and a privilege. In fairness to their fellow musicians, members are expected to make the BYOC a priority among their many activities. Consistent attendance at all rehearsals and concerts for the entire season is of utmost importance. This not only helps ensure musical success for the group as a whole, it also maintains the balance between instrument sections.

If an absence cannot be avoided, every attempt should be made to inform the ensemble's director in advance via telephone or email. Absences in excess of two per semester will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Unexcused absences in excess of two per semester will be reviewed on a case by-case basis by the staff, president, or board, and may result in either temporary or permanent suspension without a tuition refund. Failure to attend the mandatory orientation prior to the start of the season shall be viewed as an unexcused absence.

## **Unresolved Issues, Policy Changes**

Issues not specifically addressed in the Student Handbook and which remain unresolved between the BYOC staff, conductors, students, parents/guardians, and/or other parties will be addressed and voted on by the board at the next scheduled board meeting. An appeal to the board to obtain a decision must be made in writing via e-mail or otherwise to any officer of the BYOC, specifically the President, Vice President, Secretary, or Treasurer. The appeal should be made at least 10 days before the next scheduled board meeting and shall contain a brief description of the issue, all parties involved, what is being asked of the BYOC, and whether a personal appeal in front of the board is requested.

## **Tuition**

Tuition for the orchestras and chorales is: Repertory \$325, Young Artist \$300, Concert Orchestra \$275, Preludios \$250, Cantate \$275, and Chorales \$300. There is a family discount for multiple siblings (see website for details). Tuition must be paid in full by the first rehearsal and is non-refundable. Payments can be made online at [billingsyouthorchestra.org](http://billingsyouthorchestra.org) or checks may be made payable to "Billings Youth Orchestra and Chorale" and mailed to P.O. Box 80842, Billings, MT 59108. Tuition must be paid in full or deducted in equal payments once per month from your checking account and is non-refundable after the first rehearsal whether or not the student(s) attended.

## **Tuition Assistance**

The Billings Youth Orchestra and Chorale welcomes all students who qualify musically. If tuition cost is a barrier to participation, a qualified student may apply for tuition assistance to help offset tuition. A form can be obtained from our website: [www.billingsyouthorchestra.org](http://www.billingsyouthorchestra.org).

Since the BYOC is a non-profit organization and tuition is a substantial portion of our operating budget, financial assistance is limited to members who have a financial need.

## **School Programs and Private Instruction**

The Billings Youth Orchestra and Chorale recommends each of its members to participate in his/her school music program when possible. Although not required, private lessons are encouraged in addition to participation in a school orchestra program. Youth orchestras, school music programs and private teachers all share the common goal of training the next generation of musicians.

## **Concert Performances and Events**

Performances are always the highlight of every season, when students finally get to show off their accomplishments. Musicians are expected to perform in all concerts and events. The rehearsal and concert schedule can be accessed on our website:

billingsyouthorchestra.org. Please click on the rehearsal schedule for your group for the times and rehearsal facility for each group.

## Concert Dress

In order to provide a professional and uniform appearance, the following dress code is required for concerts: Inappropriate dress may result in a player not being allowed to participate in a given performance.

### Preludio Strings, Concert Orchestra

Boys: black pants, long sleeve white dress shirt, black socks, black shoes and bow tie. Girls: long black skirt or dress pants, long sleeve black top to collarbone, black opaque hose, black closed-toe, closed-heel shoes. No skirts with slits. Please, keep it professional! No black jeans, leggings, pants with cargo pockets, casual shoes (boots, tennis shoes, sandals, flip flops, etc.), low-cut blouses, belly shirts, sweatshirts, t-shirts or vests. Cantate: concert black for boys and girls (long sleeved black shirts and black pants or skirts/dresses, black socks and shoes)

### Young Artist Orchestra, & Cantate

Boys: black pants, long sleeve black dress shirt, black socks, black shoes. Girls: long black skirt or dress pants,  $\frac{3}{4}$  to long sleeve black blouse to collarbone. Please, keep it professional! No black jeans, leggings, pants with cargo pockets, casual shoes (boots, tennis shoes, sandals, flip flops, etc.), low-cut blouses, belly shirts, sweatshirts, t-shirts or vests.

### Repertory Orchestra & Chorales

Boys: black tuxedo: black dress pants, white tuxedo shirt, black cummerbund, black bowtie, black socks and black dress shoes must all be black. Girls: the requirements are similar to the other groups, but all black: formal outfit consisting of a long dress or long skirt/pants and blouse, with long sleeves, black hose, and black dress shoes. Please, no leggings. Modest jewelry is allowed. **Chorales** have dresses issued by the BYOC and uniforms for the boys.

## Practice

Musicians should be musically prepared for rehearsals. This means pieces should be practiced in advance. Rehearsals are for learning to play together and polishing the ensemble's sound. Figuring out musical elements such as rhythm, fingerings and bowings is for your personal practice at home.

## Stay Informed

The BYOC announces information about rehearsals, concerts and special events in several ways: typically by e-mail, and verbally at rehearsals. It is the responsibility of the parent and/or musician to obtain this information and be aware of any changes. Last minute, emergency schedule changes (i.e.: on a rehearsal day) will be communicated via a phone call.

## Rehearsal and Concert Rules

At the BYOC we treat all of our musicians as professionals. We expect the musicians to treat everyone with respect including fellow students. All students should read and know the following rules for behavior as a member of BYOC.

1. Arrive at least 10 minutes before rehearsal (30 minutes before a concert) begins to tune and be ready to play. Be in your seat, music stand in place, ready with instrument, music (with a pencil), and ready to play.
2. Keep your hands, feet, and objects to yourself and in your own personal space.
3. Your complete attention is required at all times. Please do not pluck your instrument or make noise while the conductor is speaking.
4. Respect the property and personnel at our rehearsal and concert locations. Pick up all trash around the rehearsal room, stack chairs (as required), and turn in extra music at the conclusion of each rehearsal, sectional, or concert.
5. Please, no food or drink during the rehearsal with the exception of water bottles. No cell phones during rehearsal.

Snacks will be provided on occasion near the end of rehearsal to allow musicians to socialize. Please clean up after yourself and inform an adult of any food/beverage spills, etc.

6. In matters of seating, the Conductor's decision is final.
7. Be respectful at all times of orchestra members, staff, conductors and guests.

## **Progressive Discipline Policy**

The BYOC believes that all students should have the opportunity to receive feedback and correct negative behavior. If a student infringes on the BYOC's rules for good behavior the conductor will exercise the following progressive discipline steps to correct the student's behavior:

1. First offense: The conductor shall give the student a direct verbal warning describing the student's inappropriate behavior.
2. Second offense: For our Concert and Preludio Strings groups will consist of the conductor giving the student a time out. For our Young Artists, Repertory, and Chorale students, the conductor may ask the student to leave the rehearsal and return at the next rehearsal.
3. Third offense: The conductor will ask to meet with the student's parents to discuss the problem and how to correct it.
4. Fourth offense: The student is expelled from the program and their tuition is non-refundable.

## **How Parents Can Help**

The BYOC is a family oriented organization and parents are an essential ingredient. Here are some of the many ways you can help:

## **Support your young musicians**

Every parent knows that for kids to succeed they need support, encouragement and a little adult supervision! Here are a few specific things you can do:

Make sure there is time for practice at home. The BYOC plays challenging material, and members need to prepare for rehearsals. Especially when there's new music to learn, orchestra musical practice will need to be part of a daily routine. Just like in sports, if a member doesn't practice, it lets down the whole team.

Ask teachers for help. If your student is having difficulty with orchestra music, his/her private teacher will be willing to help. For students too shy about asking, you can take the initiative.

Take rehearsals seriously. Sometimes students believe that missing a few rehearsals doesn't matter. Not true. Like practicing, attending rehearsals is critical to the success of the team. When members miss rehearsals, it's frustrating for the conductor and the other musicians. Important information about how a piece should be performed can be missed and typically cannot be made up. In the end, the whole orchestra suffers the consequences.

Attend BYOC concerts and special events. These are the highlights of every season, when students bask in applause and parents swell with pride. Invite your family and friends. A large enthusiastic audience is exciting for the students and tickets sales help pay for the hall.

Come with us on tour. Parents are always welcome and it's fun! You'll learn more about what the BYOC has to offer.

## **Help with financial support**

Of course, your tuition payment already makes you a supporter. Thank you! But we are able to keep our tuition low because many businesses, community minded individuals and parents like you are willing to offer financial support in other ways. For example:

- Sponsor one of our special "Go Joey" playbill ads to honor and encourage your child. With a great photo, they can be serious, funny, or even a little crazy, and concert goers love them.

- Selling our concerts is our main fundraiser. We ask that students and parents participate 100% in selling tickets for our concerts. It's a great product and an easy sell!
- Make a tax-deductible contribution. Your generosity will be recognized in our concert playbills. You can even make your donation in memory of a loved one.
- Have your business purchase an advertisement in our concert playbill, or become a corporate sponsor for a concert, a scholarship fund or other special project.

## Get more involved

This is where we ask for that most precious and rare commodity, your time.

- Ask questions and pass along your suggestions. Tell us what you like and what we could do better.
- Help spread the word. Talk to other parents about BYOC's benefits. You know that music demands the discipline and teamwork that leads to success. And BYOC is all about helping students achieve their best. Why not share this insight with your friends?
- Become a parent volunteer. BYOC is very dependent on volunteer labor. Our Board of Directors is made up entirely of parent volunteers and professionals in the community. There are many possible areas of involvement which include: assisting with concert receptions, helping with publicity, and taking photographs. Maybe you have an idea for something new the BYOC should do and you'd like to make it happen! Let us know!



