



Our Story

If indeed the ARTS are the very Soul of a vibrant and healthy Community, then what could be more important than developing the young musicians and young leaders in each generation?

Youth Symphony History

Started in 1980 as a small junior high school orchestra performing only one concert, who could have foreseen that, led by founder Gary Nicholson, the Colorado Springs Youth Symphony Association would grow into one of the **Premier Youth Orchestra Programs in the country**? Now, in our 46th year, the CSYSA features ten large Auditioned Ensembles, many high-level Chamber Music Groups, and a strong introductory grade school program.



It has long been the Mission of the Colorado Springs Youth Symphony Association:

To inspire young musicians in the Pikes Peak Region to become future leaders, to provide artistic and personal development as well as diverse musical experiences for young musicians, and to collaboratively create and share excellent music that bridges cultures and communities.

We are the most comprehensive instrumental music program for youth in this part of the country. Our mission compels us to provide Artistic Development through high quality, diverse music experiences that enrich the cultural environment here in the Pikes Peak Region and around the world. Our growing roster of Youth Music Ensembles uses the life-altering power of musical performance to connect with audiences, playing for many thousands of Children and Adults yearly, including many audiences that have little or no exposure to live orchestral music.

Offering Young People A 'THIRD PLACE'

After their HOME and SCHOOL, we offer our young musicians a 'THIRD PLACE' - of welcome, security, shared values and confidence / of new friends and 'family' / without judgement.

Great Young Citizens Making Great Music

Audiences and music professionals alike, here and across the world, agree on the exceptional music quality of the CSYSA groups. The Manager of the Sydney Opera House said: "Here listening to the Colorado Springs Youth Symphony, I can close my eyes, and it might be any top City Orchestra in the World."

Best of the Springs!

CSYSA is proud of its long history of earning the *TOP AWARDS* in the *Gazette's 'Best of the Springs'* competition in the *Non-Profit Arts Groups* Category.

CSYSA Performing Groups

Our ten auditioned ensembles, now including two jazz groups, feature young musicians from middle school through high school.



Wolfgang String Orchestra
Amadeus String Orchestra
Allegro String Orchestra
Vivace String Orchestra

Bravo! Winds
Pikes Peak Winds

Pinnacle Jazz
Ascent Big Band

Ovation Youth Orchestra
Youth Symphony

With our introductory grade school **Mozart Strings** program, we feature over 600 young musicians!

The Importance of Summer Camps

Every year we bring the young musicians from each performing group together with their conductor and teachers to bond and perform musically at a startlingly high level. This year, all of our performing groups enjoyed successful summer camps either overnight at Quaker Ridge Mountain Camp or in our home facility.

Importantly, from the very beginning, our summer camps focus on personal discipline, responsibility, team building, and leadership lessons that last a lifetime.



Our Very Own CSYSA HOME!



After years of efforts to establish a permanent home, in 2021 we located and then purchased the ideal facility - **Village Christian Church** - well-located near the intersection of Union and Fillmore. This exciting venue features over 18,000 sq. ft. of flexible rehearsal, performance, meeting, office, kitchen, and storage space, including two large rehearsal/performance halls and numerous sectional rooms.

Our CSYSA home is an architecturally rich building that needs substantial updating and improving but offers enormous promise!

CSYSA's **ENCORE! CAPITAL CAMPAIGN**

We have subsequently launched the **ENCORE! Youth Symphony Capital Campaign** with the goal of completing the purchase of our CSYSA home and restoring, upgrading, and restructuring the facility for our needs today and into the future. *To be named after **Kathy Loo** and the **Bloom Foundation**, our completed campus will forever be a **Beacon for the Arts** here in our community, **empowering generations of young musicians, and assuring the future of the CSYSA.***

The Power of Touring

Every CSYSA performing group tours - some to local schools and some across the state or the Southwest, while every second year, the full Youth Symphony Orchestra has historically traveled abroad to share our great music and our talented young role models with the world.



Whether playing here at home in the Pikes Peak or Ent Centers, or far afield in New York's Carnegie Hall, New Zealand, China, Australia, Bulgaria, Japan, Greece, or beyond, our musicians benefit from the comprehensive CSYSA instrumental music program. Exposing our young musicians to various cultures and music forms is an essential part of our CSYSA education.

While on tour, we introduce audiences to the very best of American youth.

The Latest Youth Symphony Tour to New Zealand and Australia

Following our highly successful Greece Tour in 2022, the Youth Symphony Orchestra completed a dramatic tour to **New Zealand and Australia** in June of 2024. Our talented young ambassadors delivered two weeks of thrilling performances culminating in a stellar concert/performance in the newly renovated **Sydney Opera House! *IMAGINE!***

The trip featured performances of the powerful '**Alpha and Omega**', specially commissioned for our 40th Anniversary and composed by noted American composer Soon Hee Newbold. On the tour the Youth Symphony was honored to receive the '**Global Impact Award**', presented by United World Concert Tours for *our promoting of International Understanding through our Music and Travels.*

Planning is now well underway for our 2026 International Tour.

'Through Music We Are One' – a timeless Maori Teaching and our CSYSA motto, adopted during the Youth Symphony Concert Tour to New Zealand in 1998.

Our Chamber Music Program

YS Musicians are encouraged to form and to perform in **Chamber Music Groups**, including our unique Baroque Chamber Group, at no extra charge to parents. We believe that chamber music skills are a key part of music education. In 2017 the highly acclaimed **Manitou Chamber Music Festival** was incorporated into CSYSA and now takes full advantage of our CSYSA home facility.

A Variety of Music Disciplines

While orchestras traditionally focus on classical music, we believe in exposing our young musicians to a broad scope of music from various cultures.

CSYSA is pleased to have launched our second auditioned Jazz Ensemble, **Pinnacle Jazz!** Our Jazz Ensembles, now featuring 40 of the region's top jazz musicians, perform at regional Jazz Festivals, in Jazz Clubs, and on the big stage alongside our other ensembles!

We have recorded and released an **Orchestral Jazz CD**, composed by YS Alum Sean Hennessey, recorded with the Youth Symphony Orchestra and his 'Hennessey 6' Jazz Group, produced by multiple-Grammy-Award-winning Jesse Lewis, and distributed by Summit Records.

Honoring Music Teachers!

The CSYSA mission would not be possible without the dedicated **Private and School Music Teachers** that instruct and inspire young musicians everywhere.

We work diligently to connect with and collaborate with all Music Teachers, knowing that the **arts in our Community are at their strongest when every music program thrives.**



"Participation in Youth Symphony ensembles strengthens my students as players, increases motivation, and helps make them leaders in their school programs. I highly recommend auditioning for CSYSA!"

-- Nancy Andrew, Flute Instructor

Our annual CSYSA 'Inspire' Music Teacher Awards honor School and Private Music Teachers who guide and inspire young musicians across the world.

Seeking 'Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion'

Believing that every young musician must feel safe and welcome in CSYSA, we are focusing our internal training and policies to help overcome DEI shortfalls in our community.

To ensure that all students are comfortable in concert dress, our policy was revised so that all musicians may select their preferred uniform. We have updated enrollment paperwork to honor and celebrate the spectrum of gender identities, preferred names and pronouns, and familial relationships for students and their caregivers. To further reduce socioeconomic barriers to participation, we expanded our financial aid program by 50% and established a subsidized instrument rental program. As we actively seek equitable, accessible participation for all in our community, we ratified our non-discrimination policy to align with our values of inclusion for all musicians, staff, and community members. The organization's website and social media pages now better reflect the inclusive and welcoming nature of CSYSA.

We are committed to including/ to welcoming all segments of our community in our ongoing learning journey and the Mission of the CSYSA.

Stronger Through Partnering

We continue to strengthen our position in the Pikes Peak Region by partnering with other community artistic and service groups. This includes long-standing partnerships with: the Colorado Springs Philharmonic, the Colorado Springs Children's Chorale, the ENT Center for the Arts, the Colorado College Summer Festival, the UCCS Music Department (offering our students College Credit), the Colorado Springs Conservatory, and we are committed to exploring new partnership possibilities.

C/S Philharmonic Conductor Laureate Josep Caballé Domenech!

In April 2025 Josep Caballé Domenech returned to the US to conduct the full C/S Philharmonic and our Youth Symphony in a dramatic Gala Concert featuring *Mahler's Symphony #1* at the Pikes Peak Center.

Long a CSYSA supporter and founder of the Barcelona Musician Exchange, our JCD Scholarship was created in his honor. Josep also conducted the 'side-by-side' concert of *Shostakovich's Symphony #5* in 2024 at the ENT Center, and '*Carmina Burana*' at the Pikes Peak Center in 2023 - accompanied by 170 singers.

Our Dedicated Families

Few youth activities require more of a commitment from young people and their families than orchestral music and the playing of a musical instrument at a high level.



At CSYSA we work diligently to be supportive of and flexible with our families and their efforts to develop their young musicians - within the Youth Symphony and in all available School Music Programs.

FINANCIAL AID for Our Young Musicians

We promise that 'no deserving young musician is ever turned away from CSYSA for financial reasons'.

The Importance of COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Like most non-profits, the Youth Symphony is highly dependent on Financial Contributions from those who support the Arts and who believe in our Mission of fostering young Musician/ Leaders. We enjoy broad community support in local Fund-Raisers like '*Colorado Gives Day*', '*Celebrate Youth in the Arts*' Breakfast, and our own annual '*Night of White Lights*' signature event. Leading Foundations in our community regularly recognize us with Grants and other financial contributions. Our young musicians and their families also capitalize on numerous Fund-Raising Opportunities each year to supplement their personal Tuition and Tour Accounts.

In short, the Colorado Springs Youth Symphony Association inspires young musicians to be leaders, provides artistic development and diverse musical experiences, and shares exceptional music that bridges cultures.

'Through Music We Are One'

