



## **Ensembles Handbook**

2025-2026

### **Letter from the Music Director**

Dear FWYO Musicians,

On behalf of the entire FWYO organization, congratulations on a successful audition! It is my pleasure and honor to welcome you to the FWYO family. The 2024-2025 Season will be the FWYO's 60th season, and we take pride in our distinguished history and reputation as a premier training ground for the next generation of orchestral musicians. Among FWYO's honors are being selected as one of four Youth Orchestras from America for the International Youth Orchestra Festival in Switzerland; performing under the baton of Leopold Stokowski, Samuel Adler and Morton Gould; and eleven international tours to the music capitals of England, Central and Western Europe, Asia, Japan and Mexico. Members of the FWYO go on to pursue their careers at some of the nation's finest collegiate programs in music and other fields of study. FWYO currently has alumni in the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, as well as alumni occupying positions in top orchestras around the world. We hope you look forward to making the most of this opportunity to launch your own successful career in music or any other field you choose. Your membership is both a privilege and a responsibility. You will have an enormous opportunity to create wonderful musical memories and experiences that you will carry with you for a lifetime. At the same time, all FWYO members are expected to maintain the organization's high standards and comply with the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook. We ask that both parents and students take time to read this handbook thoroughly. This handbook will answer most of your questions and will give you a head start on the adventures ahead. The staff is ready and willing to help you each step of the way, and we look forward to working together for a mutually rewarding 2024-2025 season.

With congratulations and best wishes,

Dr. Germán Gutiérrez  
Music Director

### **About the FWYO Ensembles**

**The Youth Orchestra (YO)**, conducted by Dr. Germán Gutiérrez, is the premier ensemble of the FWYO program. YO is a full orchestra that performs standard, professional-level orchestral repertoire, including complete symphonies, concertos, and overtures by classic composers, such as Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, and Brahms. Members of YO also have the opportunity to perform non-western repertoire and new music by contemporary composers. YO tours internationally every few years and collaborates frequently with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, including intensive sectionals and side-by-side performances.

*Recommended experience: Grade 9-12 (Must be under 19 at time of application)*

**Philharmonic Orchestra (PHIL)**, conducted by Brian Coatney, is an advanced intermediate orchestra that provides a full orchestra experience for advancing string players who previously may have only participated in string ensembles and for wind & percussion players who previously may have only participated in wind bands. PHIL performs a variety of standard and educational orchestral repertoire. Members of PHIL will experience performing professional repertoire by 19th-century composers, such as Verdi and Rossini, as well as 20th-century composers, such as Gould and Marquez.

*Recommended experience: Grade 8-11 (Must be under 19 at time of application)*

**String Orchestra (SO)**, conducted by Samuel Branch, is an intermediate string-only ensemble whose members will continue to develop their individual technique and ensemble skills in preparation for participation in full orchestras. SO performs a variety of standard and educational string chamber orchestra repertoire, including compositions by contemporary composers, such as Richard Meyer and Soon Hee Newbold, and by classic composers, such as Vivaldi and Telemann. In addition to conducting SO, Samuel Branch is an Associate Director of Orchestras at Martin High School in Arlington, TX.

*Recommended experience: Grade 8-12 (Must be under 19 at time of application)*

**Jr. String Orchestra (JSO)**, conducted by Jennifer Martin, is a string-only ensemble designed for an introductory orchestral experience for young string players. JSO members will continue to develop their individual technique and ensemble skills in preparation for participation in full orchestras, and will perform educational string chamber orchestra repertoire, including compositions by Richard Meyer, Soon Hee Newbold, and Deborah Baker Monday. Jennifer Martin is the Fine Arts Administrator for Fort Worth ISD.

*Recommended experience: Grade 8 & under, 2+ years of playing experience.*

**Wind Ensemble (WE)**, conducted by Brian Youngblood, is a premier woodwind, brass & percussion ensemble that performs professional-level works from the great band composers, such as Gustav Holst and Percy Grainger, while also embracing the modern band tradition of performing contemporary works. In addition to conducting WE, Brian Youngblood is Associate Director of Bands at Texas Christian University, and is a leading drill designer, arranger and program coordinator for marching bands.

*Recommended experience: Grade 8-12 (Must be under 19 at time of application)*

**Jr. Wind Ensemble (JWE)**, conducted by Christine Cumberledge, is a woodwind, brass & percussion ensemble designed for an introductory ensemble experience for middle-school musicians. JWE members will continue to develop their individual technique and ensemble skills in preparation for advanced wind ensembles & orchestras. Christine Cumberledge is the Director of Visual and Performing Arts for Hurst-Euless-Bedford ISD.

*Recommended experience: Grade 8 & under, 1-2 years of playing experience.*

**FWYO Jazz**, conducted by Ken Ebo, is a standard large jazz ensemble and performs classic, contemporary, and original works from the libraries of many great big bands, arrangers, and composers. Ken Ebo is recently retired from serving as the Music Placement Director for the US Marine Music Program in the Southwestern United States, and is an active clinician, performer, educator, and adjudicator with degrees from Indiana University and the University of South Carolina.

*Recommended 1 year of jazz experience, grade 9-12 (Must be under 19 at time of application)*

## **Rehearsals**

All rehearsals will be held at FWYO's Orchestra Hall, unless notified in advance. Times subject to change.

- The Youth Orchestra                      Sundays, 5:30–8:30pm
- Philharmonic Orchestra                Sundays, 2:45–4:45pm
- String Orchestra                        Tuesdays, 6:00–7:30pm
- Jr. String Orchestra                    Mondays, 6:00–7:15pm
- Wind Ensemble                         Sundays, 12:30-2:30pm
- Jr. Wind Ensemble                    Wednesdays, 6:00-7:15pm
- FWYO Jazz                                Mondays, 6:00-8:00pm

## **Concerts**

The FWYO concert season consists of four major concert cycles. These concerts are typically scheduled in October, December, February/March, and May, and take place in venues around the DFW metroplex. Occasionally, FWYO ensembles will perform additional outreach and community concerts, including performances at Sundance Square and Cook Children’s Medical Center.

## **Concerto Competitions**

FWYO Concerto Competitions are held annually in the fall, and the winner(s) may be invited to appear as soloists with their respective orchestras the following spring. Specific details, instructions & policies will be provided to each orchestra at the beginning of September.

## **Tuition & Fees**

Tuition is subject to change each year. Once offered a position, a deposit of \$125 will be due in order to reserve your position, and will be applied to the tuition total. Tuition is set by the Board of Directors annually, and is non-refundable. Financial aid is available for those who apply and qualify. Tuition for the 2025–2026 season is listed below. Amounts are subject to change.

- The Youth Orchestra (YO) \$765
- Philharmonic Orchestra (PHIL) \$655
- String Orchestra (SO) \$555
- Jr. String Orchestra (JSO) \$555
- Wind Ensemble (WE) \$630
- Jr. Wind Ensemble (JWE) \$555
- FWYO Jazz \$525

## **Auditions & Chair Placement**

All positions in every ensemble are open to be filled by audition each season. All current members must re-apply and re-audition each year. Auditions will be held each spring for the season beginning in the fall. Acceptance into the FWYO ensembles is not necessarily based on raw ranking alone, but on a number of considerations that determine the most appropriate outcome for each applicant, and the final decisions are at the full discretion of the ensemble conductors. Chair placement and part assignments are also at the full discretion of the conductor, and are not necessarily based on ability level alone. At their discretion, the conductors may implement seating rotations and/or chair tests in an attempt to distribute opportunities equitably, but please remember that it is prudent to seat strong players throughout the ensemble – seating order is not a hierarchy of your section!

## **Student Code of Conduct & Ensembles Handbook**

Students will be subject to the Fort Worth Youth Orchestra (FWYO) Student Code of Conduct and the Ensembles Handbook, which contains these policies as well as numerous other policies regarding conduct. In particular, the FWYO is a Drug, Tobacco, and Alcohol free institution. As well, students are expected to conduct themselves appropriately as well as dress appropriately for lessons, performances, and other FWYO functions. As well, students and parents/guardians are expected to treat all FWYO staff members as professionals and abuse will not be tolerated.

Failure to comply with the (FWYO) Student Code of Conduct and the Ensembles Handbook may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from any and all FWYO programs. Students and parents/guardians who are removed from the program for disciplinary reasons will not be refunded any tuition and fees already paid. Those who are behind on payments and removed for cause may be sent to collections.

## **Contact**

The ensembles program coordinator and primary contact person for all orchestra members & families is David Warren, FWYO Director of Artistic Operations. Mr. Warren or his representative will be present at all orchestral rehearsals and performances, will provide pertinent information and specific instructions for all orchestral functions, and is your resource for any questions regarding the rehearsal & performance calendar, accessing assigned orchestral parts, or any other concerns related to the policies & procedures of the FWYO ensembles.

**David Warren** • FWYO Director of Artistic Operations  
[dwarren@fwyo.org](mailto:dwarren@fwyo.org) • 817.923.3121 x12

## **Rehearsal Expectations**

Members of FWYO Programs & Ensembles are expected to be familiar with their rehearsal schedule, which is regularly communicated and distributed by the staff and conductors, and readily available at [fwyo.org](http://fwyo.org). Orchestra Hall will be open and rehearsal spaces will be prepared 15-30 minutes prior to the rehearsal start time, to allow members to arrive early and prepare for their rehearsal in a timely manner. Members are expected to understand and abide by the following rehearsal expectations:

- **Arrival** – members are expected to arrive 15 minutes before their rehearsal start time to unpack, tune, and ensure they have all necessary materials for rehearsal. Traffic in DFW can be unpredictable! Please ensure you leave with plenty of time for the commute.
- **Dismissal** – members are not permitted to leave FWYO property during their scheduled rehearsal times without being dismissed directly by the conductor or Mr. Warren. If a member needs to leave early, they must check out with Mr. Warren and explain the circumstances.
- **Instruments** – members are responsible for providing their instrument(s) and all equipment necessary for the successful operation of their instrument(s), including backup supplies;
- **Sheet Music** – music must be secured in a black binder or folder (no loose pages!). One printed part may be provided by the FWYO for the first rehearsal after the music is distributed, if the member is unable to print a copy at home in advance. After this date, members are responsible to retain their parts and bring them to all rehearsals – important markings will be made during the rehearsal process, and these should not be lost! If a member does not have their music at a rehearsal, they should first ask to share with their stand partner (if applicable). If a copy is needed, the member(s) may ask Mr. Warren for a copy **BEFORE** rehearsal begins. If repeated requests for music are made in subsequent rehearsals, it is grounds for disciplinary action and fines for increased printing costs.
- **Respect** your conductor and your peers by listening and remaining quiet when you are not playing your instrument. When the conductor is working with another section, it is always relevant and valuable information for you to consider as well!
- **Not permitted on stage during rehearsals** – cell phones, headphones/earbuds, chewing gum, sunglasses, hats/hoodies.
- **Food & drink** is not permitted inside the auditorium or on the stage, with the exception of water that has been properly secured inside an enclosed bottle or other vessel.
- **Clean up** your space at the end of rehearsals – please remove all personal belongings, and clean up/dispose of any trash accumulated or any moisture from wind instruments on the floor or chair.
- **Transportation** – members & families are responsible for arranging proper transportation to and from FWYO rehearsals, performances, and other events at appropriate times to ensure constant supervision. FWYO is not responsible for the supervision of members beyond the 30 minutes before or after events – repeated failure to provide proper supervision to students may result in a referral to Child Protective Services.
- **Percussion** – Percussionists are expected to bring their own set of mallets. Percussionists are expected to arrive at rehearsals and performances early; it is their responsibility to appropriately set up the relevant equipment and ensure the equipment is accounted for and appropriately stored at the end of the rehearsal/performance. Percussionists are not permitted to leave FWYO property during their scheduled rehearsal times without being dismissed directly by the conductor or Mr. Warren. If a member needs to leave early, they must check out with Mr. Warren and explain the circumstances. If any FWYO percussion equipment requires repair, replacement, or if an instrument needs to be purchased or rented for specific repertoire, please notify Mr. Warren or the Percussion Coordinator as soon as possible.

## **Rehearsal & Performance Cancellations**

FWYO reserves the right to cancel rehearsals and/or performances in the event of inclement weather or other states of emergency, and will notify orchestra members and families accordingly, via email and Remind. FWYO leadership will consider the decisions of local school districts, but will ultimately make an independent decision.

- To sign up for Remind notifications, text your respective ensemble's code to – 81010
- YO – @fwyoyo // PHIL – @fwyophil // WE – @fwyowe // JWE – @fwyowe // SO – @fwyoso // JSO – @fwyojs // FWYO Jazz – @fwyojazz

## **Attendance Policy**

A musical ensemble is a unique team requiring dedicated attendance from each of its members. Any single absence has a negative impact on the quality of preparation and performance, and multiple absences can be detrimental to the morale and success of the group. It is the responsibility of ensemble members and their families to be familiar with their rehearsal & performance schedule, and to report absences in advance.

**Please plan ahead! An unexpected illness or conflict may arise later in the concert cycle, preventing you from attending a rehearsal or performance, so be diligent not to miss for an imprudent reason early on.**

In order for an absence to be marked **excused**, a valid **reason** (see below) must be reported, notification must be submitted within a reasonable time frame, and a parent/guardian must confirm. Documentation validating the reason for the absence is always appreciated! An absence will be marked **unexcused** if the reason is invalid (see below) or unreported, notification is not submitted within a reasonable time frame, or if a parent/guardian does not confirm.

To report an absence, email [attendance@fwyo.org](mailto:attendance@fwyo.org), call 817-923-3121 x12 (leave voicemail if unanswered), or notify Mr. Warren in person.

- **Attendance is required at all rehearsals.** However, we do understand that occasional absences may need to occur. Each member may be permitted up to two (2) excused absences per concert cycle (concert + all preceding rehearsals) **OR** one (1) unexcused absence per semester (Aug-Dec; Jan-May).
- **Excused absences & required notification window to be considered excused –**
  - Notification within **24 hours** – illness/injury, family/personal emergencies, inclement weather
  - Notification within **12 days** – religious observances, school-sponsored activities/requirements (rehearsals, performances, trips, exams), college auditions/visits
- **Unexcused absences** – vacation travel, homework/study time, working on college applications, social events (prom, banquets, dances), lacking instrument (forgotten, inaccessible, disrepair, etc), work shifts.
- Reasons for absences not listed above will be evaluated by the ensemble conductor and administration on a case-by-case basis.
- A member will be considered **tardy** if they are not in their seat when the rehearsal begins (at the beginning or after a designated break), or if the member leaves the stage prematurely. **Three (3) instances of tardiness equal one (1) unexcused absence.**

- A member will be considered **ineligible to participate in an upcoming concert** if more than two (2) excused absences occur during a concert cycle (concert + all preceding rehearsals) **OR** if more than one (1) unexcused absence occurs during a semester (Aug-Dec; Jan-May). The ensemble conductor and administration will evaluate the member's eligibility on a case-by-case basis, and participation in the upcoming concert will be at the discretion of the conductor.
- **Attendance is required at all performances.** If a member is absent from **two (2) performances**, whether for excused or unexcused reasons, it is grounds for dismissal from the remainder of the FWYO concert season, at the discretion of the conductor, without tuition refund.
- Ensemble members are required to remain present for the entirety of all performances that feature multiple FWYO ensembles. Members will remain together as a group before and after their performances, and will be seated together in the audience when possible. Members will not be permitted to leave the concert venue after their performance without advance notice and prior approval. This policy is enforced to ensure the safety of all members, to show respect for fellow musicians, and to display the professionalism of our orchestras at performance venues.

### **FWYO Ensembles Performance Dress Code**

Formal concert dress attire is required on concert days (not at dress rehearsals or regular rehearsals). Ensembles dress in formal attire out of respect for the audience and for the art that is being created on stage. It is essential for all members to follow the formal concert dress code so that no individual draws attention away from the whole. Many members will have access to appropriate tuxedos or dresses from their school ensembles, but FWYO staff will also be prepared to make recommendations for acquiring the necessary attire. For those who are unable to purchase appropriate attire, please notify us, as we have a limited supply on hand for loan. FWYO staff may have extra bowties/socks/hosiery on concert days, but this is not guaranteed. If concert attire is determined to be inappropriate, FWYO staff reserves the right to request changes to be made prior to the performance, and failure to follow the dress code may jeopardize a member's opportunity to perform on stage. All FWYO members must adhere to the following formal concert dress code options (subject to change at the discretion of the ensemble conductor or administration):

#### **The Youth Orchestra**

- **Option #1** – Black tuxedo jacket, black tuxedo pants, black bowtie, black cummerbund/vest, and white tuxedo shirt. All-black leather/faux leather dress shoes (no sneakers, Keds, Converse, etc) with black, tall, knee-length socks (no skin showing when seated).
- **Option #2** – Ankle-length black dress (or ankle-length black skirt/dress pants with black blouse). Dress/blouse must be a modest cut without ornate designs, must not be strapless, sleeves must be 3/4 length or longer, and must extend to the skirt/pant waist. All-black closed-toe dress shoes (flats preferred; heels not advised). Black socks/hosiery recommended.
- **ALL** – neatly styled hair and appropriate nails for playing; no studded belts; modest jewelry and accessories should not interfere with playing your instrument; no perfumes, colognes, strong scents.

#### **All other ensembles (PHIL, SO, JSO, WE, JWE, Jazz)**

- **Option #1** – Black dress pants with black long-sleeved dress shirt (tucked in with plain black belt) and black tie. All-black leather/faux leather dress shoes (no sneakers, Keds, Converse, etc) with black, tall, knee-length socks (no skin showing when seated).
- **Option #2** – Ankle-length black dress (or ankle-length black skirt/dress pants with black blouse). Dress/blouse must be a modest cut without ornate designs, must not be strapless, sleeves must be 3/4 length or longer, and must extend to the skirt/pant waist. All-black closed-toe dress shoes (flats preferred; heels not advised). Black socks/hosiery recommended.
- **ALL** – neatly styled hair and appropriate nails for playing; no studded belts; modest jewelry and accessories should not interfere with playing your instrument; no perfumes, colognes, strong scents.

## **FWYO Ensembles Dress Code – Casual Uniform**

FWYO ensembles occasionally perform outreach/community concerts, which may be held outdoors. Members are typically permitted to follow a more casual dress code for these performances. Event-specific requirements for these performances (such as matching t-shirts) will be communicated in advance by FWYO administration, but the following guidelines can be expected:

- Tops – must not be sleeveless or strapless, and must extend to the waist of bottoms;
- Bottoms – tan khaki shorts, capris, or pants;
- Footwear – closed toes/heels with socks/hosiery (flats preferred; heels not advised);
- Specifics will be communicated in advance, including style/color-coordination, sleeve length, tucked/untucked, pants/shorts, etc.;
- Neatly styled hair; jewelry/accessories should be modest and should not interfere with playing your instrument; avoid perfumes, colognes, etc.

## **Dress Code – All other FWYO related events**

*See the FWYO Code of Conduct Dress Code.*

## **Public Health Policies – Partner and Other Venue Requirements**

While the FWYO has established public health policies for Orchestra Hall and most performances, SOME performance venues and activities with partner organizations MAY require additional public health measures for participating members, their families, and audience members, including, but not limited to:

- Wearing of face masks covering face and nose
- Use of bell covers
- Proof of COVID-19 vaccination **OR** proof of a recent negative COVID-19 test taken within a set amount of time (test type to be determined by partner organizations)

Partner organizations and venues reserve the right to deny access or participation to events for anyone (including members and family) that does not comply with their stated policies. The FWYO will not be held liable for any disruption to your experience by failing to provide requested materials and/or abide by the policies of the FWYO and/or its partner organizations.

We will make every attempt to communicate expectations for each performance prior to the event to ensure families are able to provide the requested materials and information if needed.