Handbook
2026-2027

***updated 3/31/2026**

Mr. Russell Clark & Ms. Amanda Conrade
Executive Directors

Dr. Blair Williams
Gold Symphony Conductor

Dr. Phillip Payne
Gold Symphony
Assistant Conductor &
Winds Coordinator

Mrs. Kristen Toll
Silver Orchestra Conductor

Ms. Katie Kimmel
Bronze Ensemble Conductor

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The MYS Mission Statement
The Manhattan Youth Symphony exists to educate and inspire young instrumental musicians through high quality musical experiences in an orchestral setting. Its vision is to foster commitment, nurture strength of character, build discipline, and promote performance within the context of a meaningful musical community.

These are our core values:

1. We encourage personal development, self-discipline, and working with others.
2. We value the excellence of our teaching and mentoring.
3. We aspire to a culture of fairness and mutual respect.
4. We expect a strong commitment from all members of MYS.
5. We value the relationship between our musicians and the community.
6. We strive to be an inclusive organization reflecting the diversity of the greater Riley County community.
7. We maintain a standard of high-quality repertoire in our performing ensembles.

MYS is a 501(c)3 and supported by the MYS Board of Directors.

2026-2027 MYS Board of Directors

President	Sonder Crane	boardpresident@manhattanyouthsymphony.org
Vice President	Clara Kachanes	boardvicepresident@manhattanyouthsymphony.org
Treasurer	Diane Born	boardtreasurer@manhattanyouthsymphony.org
Member-at-Large	Jenny Murdock	info@manhattanyouthsymphony.org
Member-at-Large	Penny Senften	info@manhattanyouthsymphony.org
Member-at-Large	Jenny Yuen	info@manhattanyouthsymphony.org

MYS is registered with the Greater Manhattan Community Foundation and enjoys partnerships with Kansas State University and Manhattan-Ogden USD 383. MYS also collaborates with the Manhattan Arts Center and local music teachers.

HISTORY OF THE MANHATTAN YOUTH SYMPHONY
The Gold Orchestra was founded by Dr. David Littrell in 1989. The Silver Orchestra became an intermediate orchestra in 2012, when the Bronze Training Orchestra was created to serve the community's beginning students. In 2019, Gold Orchestra expanded to include woodwinds, brass, and percussion. The Gold Orchestra returned to a string ensemble in 2020 and 2021 because of pandemic restrictions. The Gold Orchestra returned to a full orchestra again in 2022. The ensembles were also brought under one umbrella, the **Manhattan Youth Symphony** in 2022. Visit the MYS website to learn more!

COMMUNICATION
ALL MYS communications should be sent to: ExecutiveDirector@ManhattanYouthSymphony.org.

GENERAL MYS ACTIVITY TIMELINE

April
- 24: Returning Musician Commitment Forms DUE
- 30: LIVE Strings Auditions for Silver Orchestra and Gold Symphony

May
- 1: LIVE Strings Auditions for Silver Orchestra and Gold Symphony
- 1: VIDEO Wind/Brass/Percussion Auditions for Gold Symphony DUE
- 1: SO/GS David Littrell Scholarship Applications DUE (tuition)
- Late May: SO/GS Audition Notification, Returning Musician Letters, and Scholarship Notifications sent by email

June
- 1: SO/GS Contracts and Tuition DUE

August
- Mid-August: BE Recruitment Begins/Registration Opens
- 16: SO/GS Music Folder Pickup, 6-7pm
- 21: BE David Littrell Scholarship Applications Due (tuition)
- Late August: BE Scholarship Notifications sent by email

September
- 4: BE Registration and Tuition DUE
- Mid-September: David Littrell Scholarship Applications Due (Rock Springs)
- 12: BE/SO Rehearsals Begin

October
- Early October: SO/GS Rock Springs Payment DUE
- 3: BE “Informance” Concert Dress Rehearsal - REQUIRED
- 10: GS Rehearsals Begin
- 10: BE “Informance” Concert - REQUIRED
- 24-25: SO/GS Rock Springs Ranch Retreat

November
- 7: NO REHEARSAL, District Auditions
- 14: SO/GS Dress Rehearsal
- 15: SO/GS Sound Check and Concert, 2:30pm

December
- mid-December: BE Recruitment Begins/Registration Open

January
- Early Jan: BE Registration and Tuition DUE
- Mid-Jan: BE Rehearsals Begin

February
- Mid-Feb: BE “Informance” Concert

Expectations for ALL MYS Musicians

- You MUST be a member of your public school orchestra/band, if there is one available. Full-year participation is encouraged and generally expected, but at a minimum you MUST be enrolled at least one semester per year.
- You MUST commit to the fall or spring season, dates specific to your ensemble.
- You MUST attend ALL rehearsals and concerts, unless otherwise excused *in advance.*
- Absences

  *1. Total **excused absences,** including illness, should be limited to **one** or fewer. Missing more than this is grounds for removal from the orchestra at MYS staff discretion.*

  *2. Complete the **Absence Request Form** for excused absences such as important family trips and weddings, at least **two weeks prior** with a parent/guardian statement of the reason(s) for the absence.*

*3. Complete the **Absence Practice Reflection Form** and submit up to **one week** after the absence date.*

- *Consult your orchestra's rehearsal plan on the MYS website for the date of the absence.*
- *Set aside time (at least half the length of the rehearsal missed) to practice the excerpts outlined in the Rehearsal Plan.*
- *Complete this form simultaneously while practicing.*
- *You are expected to complete a focus/strategy/reflection cycle for at least 3 specific excerpts.*
- *The form must be digitally signed before submitting it, by both the parent/guardian and the student musician.*

4. Students should be aware that absences, for any reason, may affect chair seating.
*5. Absences to "sleep in" or take a day off are not excused. The intent of the policy is to provide some accommodation for families and students with **valid schedule conflicts.***

- You are required to bring your **MYS music folder, pencil, and instrument** to each rehearsal.
- No cell phone use during the rehearsal time, wearing of hats, or gum chewing during rehearsals.
- You are responsible for being **punctual** to all orchestra rehearsals, concerts, and other activities. It is recommended that you arrive no later than **15 minutes before** each rehearsal and **allot time for warming up** on your instrument.
- You are expected to practice and learn all pieces during individual practice time. Rehearsals are to be spent on ensemble-related preparation, not mastering individual parts.

BRONZE ENSEMBLE

Registration Information

Participation in the Bronze Ensemble does not require an audition. Students should have some experience playing their instrument (violin, viola, cello, or double bass), and should be able to identify notes and read simple rhythms.This is a training ensemble within the MYS program.

- **Bronze Ensemble Musicians, please complete the **Fall 2026 Bronze Ensemble Registration Form** by Friday, September 4th, 2026.*

	Fall 2026	**Spring 2027**
Registration and Tuition DUE	September 4, 2026	TBA
Registration Form Link	**Fall 2026 MYS Bronze Ensemble Registration Form**	
Rehearsal and Performance Schedule	***Saturdays, 10:00-11:00 AM*** Sept: 12, 19, 26 and Oct 3 Oct 10: Final Rehearsal and "Informance" Concert	***Saturdays, 10:00-11:00 AM*** TBA
Rehearsal Location	Eisenhower Middle School *800 Walters Drive* *Manhattan, KS 66502*	TBA

Instruction is provided by MYS conducting staff, assisted by a pre-service string music education student conductor who is being mentored by MYS veteran music teacher educators. The last rehearsal includes an "Informance" Concert by the students for friends and family.

Additional Bronze Ensemble Expectations

- Adhere to **Expectations for ALL MYS Musicians** listed above
- Students are expected to wear the current season MYS t-shirt (provided) for the "Informance" Concert.

SILVER ORCHESTRA & GOLD SYMPHONY

Returning Musician Information

- ALL Silver Orchestra and Gold Symphony Returning Musicians must complete the **Fall 2026 Manhattan Youth Symphony Returning Musician Commitment Form** by **Friday, May 1, 2026 at 11:59 PM.** This helps the conductors confirm your participation and/or audition choices in addition to those that are auditioning as a new participant or into another ensemble. *NOTE: Silver Orchestra and Gold Symphony string musicians that wish to remain in the ensemble they participated in the previous fall, may opt to complete the Returning Musician Commitment Form for the upcoming season. Violins, no action is required to be considered for section changes as that decision is up to the discretion of the directors. Please note that violin 1 and violin 2 sections should be considered as collaborative, rather than ranked, sections. Students may be moved between sections in either direction from year to year.*

Audition Information

NEW & Returning String Musicians seeking ensemble advancement.

- Live auditions for placement in the Silver Orchestra or Gold Symphony are **April 30- May 1, 2026** at Eisenhower Middle School, 800 Walters Drive, MHK, 66502 in the Band Room. Sign up for an audition time: **Fall 2026 MYS Silver Orchestra & Gold Symphony LIVE String Auditions*. Please signup by Friday, April 24.***

NEW & Returning Wind, Brass, and Percussion Musicians (Gold Symphony ONLY)

- Submit the **Fall 2026 MYS Gold Symphony Wind/Brass/Percussion Audition Form** which includes musician information and the link to your audition video(s) by **Saturday, May 1, 2026 at 11:59 PM** (see audition video suggestions below).

STRINGS

Auditions are held in the late spring to give string students an opportunity to enter for the first time or place into another ensemble level. The Silver Orchestra serves as an intermediate orchestra and the Gold Symphony accommodates the most advanced students. Seating auditions for placement within each orchestra will take place early in the regular season.

Silver Orchestra Audition Requirements

1. Scales: 2-octave scales - prepare one major and one minor scale of your choice from the options below. Please perform separate quarter notes at a minimum 92 bpm.
    - Violin - C, G, D, A major; G, D melodic minor
    - Viola/Cello - F, C, G, D major; C, E, G melodic minor
    - Bass - E, G, F major; E, G melodic minor
2. Prepared Solo: Should demonstrate the player's most advanced ability. SO should be at least late Suzuki Book 2 or equivalent difficulty. This should be a composition written for a solo instrument and not an orchestral part from school.
3. Sight Reading: A short excerpt will be provided at the audition.

Gold Symphony String Audition Requirements

1. Scales: 3-octave scales - prepare one major and one minor scale of your choice from the options below. Please perform separate quarter notes at a minimum 92 bpm.
    - Violin - C, G, D, A major; G, A, B melodic minor
    - Viola/Cello - F, C, G, D major; C, D, E melodic minor
    - Bass (2-octave) - E, A, F, G major; E, F#, A melodic minor

2. Prepared Solo: Should demonstrate the player's most advanced ability. GS should be at least Suzuki Book 4 or equivalent difficulty
3. Sight Reading: A short excerpt will be provided at the audition

WOODWIND, BRASS, & PERCUSSION - Gold Symphony ONLY

Auditions are held in mid-May for both new and returning students. High school woodwind, brass, and percussion students are greatly encouraged to audition to perform with the Gold Symphony. Each position will be re-auditioned every year.

Woodwind & Brass Audition Requirements

1. Scale: chromatic scale demonstrating your range. Slurring ascending scale, tonguing descending scale.
2. Prepared Solo: Any prepared solo of your choice, demonstrating your playing ability. No accompaniment is needed.

Percussion Audition Requirements

1. Prepared Solo: Any prepared solo of your choice on marimba, xylophone, snare, or timpani. Your prepared solo should demonstrate your playing ability.

How to make an audition video:

1. *Arrange the camera frame so your entire instrument and upper body can be viewed throughout the audition as much as possible.*
2. *Please begin the audition with an introduction of who you are including your name, instrument(s), and the title of the solo you have prepared.*
3. *Wind and Brass players should play their chromatic scale first, then the prepared solo.*

Participation Contract

All SO and GS students (new and returning) will receive the **Fall 2026 MYS Silver Orchestra & Gold Symphony Musician Contract** for the season. ***DO NOT SUBMIT until after the audition process is complete.*** The Musician Contract and Tuition payment are DUE by June 1, 2026.

Rehearsal Schedules & Locations

Silver Orchestra

Saturdays, 9:00-11:00 AM - Rehearsal location - Eisenhower Middle School - *800 Walters Drive, Manhattan, KS 66502*

- Sept: 12, 19, 26
- Oct: 3, 10, 17
- Oct. 24-25: Rock Springs Retreat
- Oct: 31
- Nov: 7 NO REHEARSAL, District Auditions
- Nov: 14-Dress Rehearsal
- Nov: 15-Sound Check and Concert

Gold Symphony

Saturdays, 10:00 AM-noon - McCain, Room 201 & Kirmser Hall - *1501 Goldstein Cir, Manhattan, KS 66506*

- Oct: 10, 17
- Oct. 24-25: Rock Springs Retreat
- Oct: 31
- Nov: 7 NO REHEARSAL, District Auditions
- Nov: 14-Dress Rehearsal
- Nov: 15-Sound Check and Concert

Additional Silver Orchestra and Gold Symphony Expectations

- Adhere to **Expectations for ALL MYS Musicians** listed above
- The **Rock Strings Retreat**, **dress rehearsals,** and **concerts** are **required** rehearsal events. No students will be excused from these events. Students who are considering taking the ACT in the fall need to schedule it around the MYS schedule.
- SO/GS members are responsible for formal black concert attire. Black collared-dress shirt or blouse (½ or full length sleeve), long black dress pants, slacks, or skirt, black socks or tights, and closed-toed black dress shoes. Ties are optional, but must be black.

A symphony, orchestra, and ensemble (much like a sports team, marching band, choir, etc) excels only when the collective membership works towards a common goal. If any one member is unable to play their part, the collective result is less than satisfactory. By its very nature, an orchestra relies on the unity of each section to create the masterpiece that was initially envisioned by each composer. This may be accomplished ONLY by commitment and hard work. The end result is rewarding and always magnificent.

TUITION, SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES, & MATERIALS

Tuition:

Tuition may be paid:

- by using a credit card on the MYS website.
- by cash/check made out to: ***Manhattan Youth Symphony***
    - List the student name(s) and orchestra(s) in the memo and mail to:
        Manhattan Youth Symphony
        2604 Kirkwood Dr.
        Manhattan, KS 66502

FALL 2026

	Bronze Ensemble	**Silver Orchestra**	**Gold Symphony**
Tuition - ***SO & GS DUE June 1, BE DUE Sept 4***	$75.00	$160.00	$120.00
Rock Springs Retreat - ***DUE Early OCT*** ***anticipated cost listed - do not pay ahead of time.***	N/A	*$140.00*	*$140.00*
Fall 2026 TOTAL MYS FEES	**$75.00**	**$300.00**	**$260.00**

Spring 2027

	Bronze Ensemble
Tuition - ***Bronze Ensemble DUE early January***	$75.00
Spring 2027 TOTAL MYS FEES	**$75.00**

ANY late payments will incur a $20 late fee each week that they are overdue.

Tuition Includes

- High-quality instruction by MYS conducting staff
- Use of rehearsal and concert facilities
- MYS t-shirt
- Use of an MYS music folder, music, and other learning materials provided by the conductors

Rock Springs Retreat Fee Includes

- High-quality instruction by MYS conducting staff
- Use of RSR facilities
- Lodging at RSR Saturday evening
- Meals at RSR cafeteria
    - Saturday: lunch, dinner
    - Sunday: breakfast

Refunds

MYS strongly values commitment and investment. We encourage you to diligently consider your schedule and the MYS schedule to determine your involvement prior to completing registration. If, after submitting the musician contract (GS/SO) or registration (BE), a conflict arises and you need to withdraw from participating, you may be eligible for a partial refund.

- For Fall 2026: A 50% refund of tuition is available for all MYS musicians if they need to withdraw from participating by August 31. Beginning September 1, there will be no refunds available for any ensemble.

Scholarship Opportunities

The Dr. David Littrell Scholarship Fund will open for applications in April 2026. Funds granted may be used to offset tuition (SO/GS: DUE May 1; BE: DUE September 5) and Rock Springs Retreat fees (SO/GS ONLY: DUE early September) for applicants. Learn more on the MYS website.

If cost is an issue, please contact the MYS Executive Director, ExecutiveDirector@ManhattanYouthSymphony.org to discuss payment plans and/or scholarship options.

Additional Materials Needed

- Music stand: A Manhasset music stand, though not mandatory, is far superior to wire stands for use at home and at Rock Springs.
- Concert dress uniform for Silver Orchestra and Gold Symphony (see above).
- Pencil in rehearsal at all times.

Additional Materials Suggested

- Tuner
    - Online Resources
        - Drone Tone Tool
    - Suggested Apps
        - Tuner Lite by Piascore
        - insTuner
        - Cleartune
        - PanoTuner
        - Pitch
    - Devices
        - Shar Metro Tuner
        - Korg CA-50 Chromatic Tuner
- Metronome
    - Online Resources
        - Metronome Online

    - Suggested Apps
        - Tempo
        - Metronome (several)
        - Drum Beats +
        - MetroTimer
    - Devices
        - BOSS DB-30 Dr. Beat Metronome
        - Seiko Quartz Metronome
- Combination Tuner/Metronomes
    - Online Resources
        - The Online Metronome/Tuner
    - Suggested Apps
        - Tonal Energy Tuner & Metronome
        - Smart Metronome & Tuner
        - Tuner & Metronome - Soundcorset
    - Devices
        - Korg TM-60 Combination Tuner/Metronome
        - BOSS TU-30 Metronome & Tuner Combo
        - BOSS DB-90 Dr. Beat Metronome/Tuner

Additional Music Training Resources

- https://trainer.thetamusic.com/en
- https://www.musictheory.net/
- https://www.teoria.com/

MUSIC OPPORTUNITIES IN THE MANHATTAN AREA

The Manhattan area has numerous opportunities for student musicians to broaden their musical experiences.

Kansas State University: https://www.k-state.edu/mtd/academics/music/orchestra/camps.html

- **String Leadership Institute |** June 14-18, 2026
- **Tallgrass String Festival & All-State Prep Day |** September 22, 2026
- **String Fling |** November 3, 2026

The **Kansas State Symphony Orchestra** performs numerous times throughout the fall and spring semesters. Dr. Rachel Dirks directs this orchestra. The concerts are free. Learn more: https://www.k-state.edu/mtd/academics/music/orchestra/concert-schedule.html

The **Manhattan Symphony Orchestra** is an ensemble that celebrates the community found in the music experience. Comprised of student, amateur, and professional musicians, the MSO strives to create meaningful music experiences for musicians and audience members alike. Learn more: https://www.mhksymphony.org/.