



el paso symphony youth orchestras

a division of the el paso symphony

2020-2021

MEMBERSHIP HANDBOOK

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestras (EPSYO) is to provide a challenging yet supportive environment where young musicians in the Greater El Paso Region can advance their musical studies and achieve the highest level of artistic and personal growth regardless of financial need and in a **non-competitive atmosphere**. Through advanced training, performance opportunities, mentorships, and a unique relationship with the El Paso Symphony, the EPSYO is committed to helping students develop key life skills and memorable experiences.

ELIGIBILITY

All students between the ages of 8-22 are eligible to apply for membership. Students in 2nd through 12th grade are **required** to be enrolled in their school's instrumental music program (if available). Students in college are strongly encouraged to be enrolled in their school's instrumental music program. Membership and placement will be determined by audition.

ORCHESTRAS and ENSEMBLES

El Paso Youth Orchestra (EPYO): Full orchestra for the most advanced string, wind, brass, and percussion players.

El Paso Youth Symphony (EPYS): Full orchestra for intermediate string, wind, brass, and percussion players.

El Paso Youth String Ensemble (EPYSE): Strings-only ensemble for intermediate players with some orchestral experience.

El Paso Youth String Philharmonic (EPYSP): Strings-only ensemble for beginning players with limited orchestral experience.

AUDITION REQUIREMENTS

To request an audition, applicants must fill out an application form available either online at the EPSYO website, www.epsyo.org, or from their school music teacher. There is a \$5 non-refundable audition fee that must accompany the application in order to guarantee an audition time. Auditions will be held each season in June and August (depending on openings). Auditions may include scales, solo pieces, sight-reading, and specific orchestral excerpts. Applicants are expected to arrive at least 10 minutes before their scheduled audition time, and auditions will last between 5 and 10 minutes. Please check the website for the most updated information.

PLACEMENT and SEATING

Following auditions, acceptance and placement results will be sent via mail and/or email. **Seating will be subject to change and/or rotated at the discretion of the Music Director or Staff Conductor throughout the season.** All decisions by the Music Director or Staff Conductor will be final.

The conductor determines the seating and rotation within the various sections of each orchestra. Competition for individual chairs is not a part of the EPSYO program.

Seating is not based on the ranking of performers(!!!); rather parts are rotated from piece to piece (most frequently in winds and percussion), and from concert to concert. Every member of the orchestra plays an important role. For example, strong players are needed in both 1st and 2nd Violin sections.

Please contact the EPSYO Music Director if you have questions or concerns regarding your child's role in his/her ensemble.

RESPONSIBILITIES, PERSONAL CONDUCT and MUSICAL EXPECTATIONS

In order to create a professional and productive learning environment for everyone, EPSYO members are expected to:

- be at practice regularly and come prepared to rehearsals each week. Members are encouraged to bring their orchestra music to their private teachers for additional help.
- arrive to rehearsals at least fifteen minutes early to unpack, warm-up, and tune. Members should be seated and ready to play at the designated rehearsal time.
- bring all EPSYO music and a pencil to rehearsals. Members are responsible for their own music and folder, and lost music may result in a replacement fee (no exceptions). It is important always to have a pencil with an eraser to mark music. Music should never be marked in pen or ink!
- provide their own instrument (except for some percussion instruments) and keep them well maintained. Members must bring their instruments and any other necessary items (mutes, rosin, shoulder rests, strings, mallets...) to rehearsal each week.
- show respect for themselves, EPSYO staff and volunteers, and other members of the orchestra. Members should not talk, act, or dress in a disruptive manner. Any disruptive, rude, or illegal behavior will not be tolerated and may result in dismissal from the program.
- not use any electronic device (cellular phone, iPod, gaming device, etc.) while rehearsal or performance is taking place. Any such use will result in the device being taken away by an EPSYO staff member for the remainder of the rehearsal. **Repeated violation of this policy may result in dismissal from the program.**
- be respectful of the rehearsal or performance facility and leave the space the way it was found.

SCHOOL PARTICIPATION

The EPSYO is designed to supplement, not replace, school music programs. All EPSYO members in 2nd through 12th grade are **required** to participate in and be a member in good standing with their school music program if given the choice. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from EPSYO. The EPSYO will work closely with local teachers to ensure this requirement is fulfilled. While EPSYO will do its best to avoid conflicts with the school music programs, all music related school activities take precedence over EPSYO rehearsals.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance will be taken at rehearsal each week. Since attending rehearsals is the backbone of thorough preparation and good performance, a strong attendance policy is necessary for the strength of the EPSYO. Attendance at rehearsals and concerts does not only affect the preparation of that individual member, but also affects all the members of that ensemble. It is important that members take attendance seriously and make every effort to attend all rehearsals. It is understandable that there will be occasional conflicts that will take precedence over EPSYO events. However, the EPSYO recognizes a hierarchy when it comes to student activities and responsibilities. As such, families that are a part of the EPSYO will also ascribe to these same tenants:

- 1) Academic responsibilities come first.**
- 2) Academic Music responsibilities come next.**
- 3) Every other extracurricular activity is on a level playing field (including the EPSYO).**

Thus, you will need to make decisions as a musician and family so as to commit fully to those things that are important to you. The EPSYO goes to considerable lengths to devise a schedule (which is provided at the beginning of the year in its entirety) that works with school districts and major activities. You must be proactive in identifying potential problems in your schedule and doing something about it. Most organizations are understanding if an attempt has been made to minimize scheduling issues IN ADVANCE. Your excessive absence in rehearsal/tardiness to events can not be tolerated in the EPSYO—not unlike the other programs you may participate in.

ABSENCES

Members are allowed a maximum of two (2) absences per concert cycle. If a member has more than two absences, his/her participation in the concert will be subject to review by the EPSYO Music Director, Staff Conductor, and EPSYO Administration. Members with excessive absences may be dismissed from the EPSYO program. **Dress rehearsals and concerts are mandatory.** Absence from a dress rehearsal may result in exclusion from the concert at the discretion of the Music Director and EPSYO staff.

The EPSYO understands that all music-related school activities and religious worship will take precedence over EPSYO events.

REPORTING ABSENCES

All absences, early dismissals, and late arrivals must be reported to the EPSYO in advance of your Rehearsal date either by filling out an "Absence Request Form" online at www.epsyo.org, or by calling the EPSYO Office at (915) 525 - 8978. Although it is respectful to report an upcoming absence to your ensemble conductor, please be sure to formally report your absence with the administrative office.

SCHEDULING and VACATION

Please record all EPSYO events on your family calendar so these dates are reserved well in advance. When possible, plan family vacations or special events to avoid conflicts with rehearsals.

TUITION and FEES

All tuition and fees must be paid in full by mid-season (January). **If you are not able to pay in full, you may apply for Financial Assistance at the beginning of the orchestral season.** Fees can be paid by check, cash, or credit card. Checks should be made out to "EPSYO" and mailed to the EPSYO office, P.O. Box 180, El Paso, TX 79942. Credit card payments can be taken online through our website, www.epsyo.org, or over the phone by contacting the EPSYO office at (915) 525-8978.

TUITION

EPYSP: \$375

EPYSE: \$375

EPYS: \$425

EPYO: \$475

FEES

Audition fee: \$5 (*non-refundable*)

Administrative fee: \$50 (*non-refundable*)

Music replacement fee: \$1 per piece

WITHDRAWALS and REFUNDS

Both the Audition Fee and Administrative Fee are non-refundable. **Withdrawal requests must be made in writing to the EPSYO General Manager** who will determine the refund amount based on the date the request is made:

- Before the first rehearsal: 100% tuition refund
- Before the fourth rehearsal: 50% tuition refund
- After the fourth rehearsal: No refunds

If a member has been awarded financial aid or a scholarship withdraws from the program during the year, the member will be responsible for paying the remaining balance of their tuition or financial aid reward.

FINANCIAL AID and SCHOLARSHIPS

All EPSYO members will be eligible for need-based Financial Aid. **No student accepted into EPSYO will be excluded from the program because of financial need.**

All members that receive financial aid or scholarships are **expected** to maintain excellent attendance and participate for the full year, are **expected** to participate in all EPSYO Fundraising Events, and are asked to serve as a volunteer for at least ten (10) hours at some point throughout the 2020-2021 Concert Season. Failure to meet these minimal requirements set forth in the financial aid contract signed by all recipients at the beginning of the year may result in your financial award being rescinded or may make the family ineligible to apply for financial aid in the future.

Requests for financial assistance must be made in writing using the Financial Aid Application, and by including supporting documentation. Please check the website for deadlines and to download the application forms. If your financial situation changes during the year, you may request special financial aid consideration at that time.

REASONS FOR DISMISSAL

- Failure to participate in school orchestra or band (excludes college members). Dismissal from school or music program will also be viewed as failure to participate in the school's music program.
- Not meeting the musical demands of the orchestra by showing up to rehearsals unprepared.
- Excessive absences or tardiness.
- Repeated violation of the EPSYO policy on using electronic devices in rehearsal or performance (See "Responsibilities, Personal Conduct, and Musical Expectations" above).
- Participating in any rude, disruptive, or illegal activity during any EPSYO-related rehearsal, concert, or event (See "Responsibilities, Personal Conduct, and Musical Expectations" above).
- Intentionally causing or attempting to cause damage to any space used for EPSYO-related rehearsals, concerts, and events.
- Intentionally attempting to steal any EPSYO property or property in any space used by EPSYO related rehearsals, concerts or events.
- Causing or attempting to cause physical or emotional injury to any person involved in EPSYO, including employees of any space used during EPSYO-related rehearsals, concerts, or events.
- Possessing, handling, or transmitting any illegal substances or weapons during EPSYO-related rehearsals, concerts, or events.
- Violating any local, state, or federal laws.

If a member is determined to have engaged in prohibited activities during any EPSYO-related rehearsal, concert, or event, then:

- the member will be sent home at the expense of the parent/guardian
- the parent/guardian will be financially responsible for any damages or expenses that may result from the member's behavior
- EPSYO will inform local law enforcement if necessary

Any case involving the potential dismissal of a student will be reviewed by the Music Director, EPSYO Staff, and EPSYO Board. All decisions will be final, and refunds will not be given.

CONCERT DRESS

Ladies: Black full-length skirt or pants with black stockings and black dress shoes (no sandals, sneakers or boots); pants must be formal (no jeans or spandex) and loose fitting; white top.

Gentlemen: Black dress slacks, black socks, black dress shoes (no sneakers or boots); white long-sleeved button-down shirt, no tie.

TICKET POLICY

EPSYO concerts are all general admission (GA) seating except for the Side by Side Concert and other special events. Students, seniors, and military will receive a discount on all tickets. All tickets will be available through the El Paso Symphony Office (915) 532 - 3776, at rehearsals preceding the concert, and also at the door the day of the concert. Seating is subject to availability. Season subscriptions will be available up to one week before the first concert of the season.

MUSIC COPIES

Each EPSYO member will receive one (1) copy of each piece of music for each concert. If a member loses his/her music, s/he will be charged \$1.00 per piece that needs to be replaced.

PRIVATE LESSONS

Although not required, private lessons are **strongly** recommended. Members are encouraged to bring their orchestra music to their private teachers for extra help outside of EPSYO rehearsals. For recommendations of private teachers, please feel free to contact the EPSYO Office.

FUNDRAISING EVENTS

As a non-profit organization, the EPSYO will be holding fundraising events to support its programs throughout the year. In order to keep tuition costs as low as possible, we expect each member to participate by selling at least \$150 worth in fundraising money through the three fundraising events scheduled throughout the 2020-2021 season. ***The tuition collected each season only covers 30% of the total expenses required to maintain EPSYO operations.***

PARENT/STUDENT VOLUNTEERING

All parents are welcome and encouraged to notify us if they would like to help the EPSYO and its mission. An important and driving force for EPSYO, volunteer support and dedication will play a key role in the success of the program. Responsibilities of a Parent/Student Volunteer can include, but not be limited to:

- Fundraising
- Assisting the conductor
- Merchandise sales table at concerts
- Rehearsal set-up and/or break-down
- Orientation weekend assistance
- Program advertising
- Merchandise
- Social activities and events
- Ticket sales

EPSYO OPPORTUNITIES and BENEFITS

Members will have the opportunity to participate in many unique and exciting events; these may include chamber music, master classes and clinics, and concerts with internationally renowned musicians, as well as local retreats, The binational youth orchestra, and national and international tours. It is expected that EPSYO members will attend all events, if possible.

EPSO CLASSICAL SERIES CONCERTS

For all El Paso Symphony (EPSO) Classical Series Concerts, members will have the opportunity to receive one (1) complimentary ticket and purchase up to four (4) more tickets at a reduced price. EPSYO members will receive tickets on the floor subject to availability (a value normally worth \$28 - \$37 each). EPSYO members will receive an ID card which they must present at the Plaza Box Office the day of the concert. Family members and friends will not be able to use the ID without the EPSYO member present. Tickets will only be available the day of the concert, and are subject to availability. Members will only be allowed to attend one concert per weekend (i.e. either Friday or Saturday). Please check the EPSO website for all Classical Series Concert dates (www.epso.org).

CONCERTO COMPETITION

The EPSYO Concerto Competition, open to both EPSYO members and non-EPSYO members, is held every winter. One Grand Prize winner will perform with the El Paso Symphony on the Side-by-Side Concert in the Plaza Theatre and one EPSYO Prize winner will perform with the EPYO on the Season Finale concert. See the website for rules and an application form.

REHEARSAL and CONCERT LOCATIONS

Jefferson High School: 4700 Alameda Ave.

Plaza Theatre: 125 Pioneer Plaza (back stage door is off Main St.)

Abraham Chavez Theatre: 1 Civic Center Plaza (back stage door is off San Antonio St.)

CONTACT US

Office address: Abraham Chavez Theatre (Grand Tier Level), 1 Civic Center Plaza, El Paso, TX 79901

Mailing address: P.O. Box 180, El Paso, TX 79942

Phone: (915) 525 - 8978

Fax: (915) 533 - 8162

Email: info@epsyos.org

Website: www.epsyos.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/epsyos

YouTube Channel: www.youtube.com/epsyos

PROPRIETARY INFORMATION

The EPSYO name, logos, and photos, are the sole property of EPSYO and shall not be used or recreated in any manner by any person without written authorization from EPSYO.

EPSYO ARTISTIC STAFF

Dr. James O. Welsch, Music Director/ EPYO Conductor

Jose Rios, EPYS Conductor

Nathan Black, EPYSE Conductor

Alejandro Gonzalez, EPYSP Conductor

Manuel Cardona-Lopez, Violin Coach

Aime DeAnda, Violin Coach

Jennifer Martinez, Viola Coach

Alejandro Gonzalez and Nathan Black, Cello Coaches

Hector Olea, Double Bass Coach

EPSYO ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Dr. James O. Welsch, General Manager

Sarai Perez Gallardo, Assistant Business Manager and Financial Assistance Counselor

Manuel Cardona-Lopez, Program Assistant

EPSO STAFF

Bohuslav Rattay, Music Director

Ruth Ellen Jacobson, Executive Director

Linda Fischer, Business Manager

Rosemary Flores, Operations Manager

Felisha Britton, Ticket Manager

Pamela Kihnley, Director of Fund Management