

August 23rd, 2020

Hello BYO family!

The Board of Directors and BYO Staff have been hard at work planning for the 2020/21 season and we're excited about being able to provide your talented young musicians a compelling orchestra experience, albeit modified from the normal BYO format.

We have used several guiding principles in developing this plan and will continue to apply these when making adjustments as we move through the season together:

1. The health and safety of our musicians, staff, and families is of primary importance, and every decision during the season will be made with this in mind. We will follow all state and local health department guidelines for the protection of everybody in the BYO family.
2. Collaborating with other musicians, coaches, and the Conductor to rehearse and perform challenging orchestral music in a supportive environment is at the core of what we do. Providing a compelling BYO experience is more important this season than any in our 50+ year history.
3. We will be creative and find ways to provide a season that is engaging, challenging, and fun for our musicians as we explore new repertoire and methods of rehearsing and performing.

We are preparing to launch into the orchestra season on Saturday, September 12th. We know that you have many questions and will be happy to answer them as you enroll your musician and prepare for the season.

Rehearsal Location & Rules

Laney College is closed for the fall semester so BYO will be rehearsing at Creekside Commons located at 1035 Carol Ln. in Lafayette just off of Highway 24 near the Pleasant Hill Rd. exit. The facility offers ample outdoor and indoor space that will allow us to rehearse in a modified format while maintaining social distancing and in conforming with Contra Costa County and State of California health guidelines. This will include wearing masks, maintaining at least 6 ft of distance, hand sanitizer, no snacks, and other precautions. More details on rehearsal logistics to follow in early September.

Rehearsal Schedule

We will start the season rehearsing in small ensembles, working on chamber music and a piece to celebrate the 250th anniversary of Ludwig van Beethoven's birth in 1770. The orchestra will rehearse Saturday mornings, alternating between in-person outdoor sessions, (weather permitting) and online sessions as follows:

In-person

On in-person rehearsal Saturdays, half of the orchestra will rehearse from 9:00am – 10:45am and the other half from 11:15am-1:00pm. Each session will allow for two 45-minute sessions separated by a 15-minute break. The 30-minute gap between groups will allow for switching groups with no overlap.

Online

Zoom and other video conference tools are not very suitable for musicians to play together live online due to high latency (audio delay between participants). After evaluating multiple software applications, BYO has decided to implement [Jamulus](#) to enable small groups of musicians to play together live over the internet. With the proper equipment, latency can be reduced such that virtual rehearsals become not just possible, but quite compelling. Virtual rehearsals will primarily take place Saturday mornings with some scheduling flexibility based on each ensemble's needs.

BYO will continue to provide coaching support for both in-person and online rehearsals. Ensembles will be able to schedule additional virtual sessions to independently work on their music together.

Performances

County health guidelines do not allow for large groups to gather for performances and it is not yet clear when that might change. BYO will use digital performances until we are able to perform for a live audience.

Tuition, Fundraising, & Scholarships

BYO is reducing tuition by \$150/musician this season as virtual rehearsals will require families to purchase some additional equipment (see below). BYO is adding a \$300/family fundraising requirement to offset additional expenses that the orchestra will incur. We are launching an exciting new Scrip program to supplement the orchestra's Practice-A-Thon, Silent Auction, and other fundraising programs. ***A portion of scrip funds raised in excess of the fundraising requirement will be shared with the family in the form of a tuition credit, providing families with a means to pay for some or in some cases all of their musician's tuition.***

The BYO Scholarship program has also been refreshed to standardize the available support levels. Details are available on the orchestra website and applications are due on September 12th.

Required Equipment

BYO's online rehearsals will be an essential part of this season and, like in-person rehearsals, attendance is required. It is critical that musicians have the following equipment at home prior to September 19th to participate in virtual rehearsals:

- A computer (PC or Mac) with a minimum 1.5GHz processor speed (all but the oldest computers will meet this requirement) and a high-speed internet connection capable of at least 200 kbps upload and download (here too, most internet service plans will meet this requirement).
- An external audio USB interface. One input is fine if your musician will use a single microphone for both speaking and playing into. If they plan to mic the instrument and speak into another microphone, you'll need two inputs. Here's a few solid options:
 - Behringer U-Phoria UMC22
 - Focusrite Scarlett Solo
 - PreSonus Audiobox USB 96
- Ethernet wire plugged into the router and computer (plus an adapter if your computer doesn't have an ethernet port). WiFi adds too much latency so musicians must plug in.
- A pair of wired headphones (over-the-ear is best). Depending on which audio interface is used, you may also need a mini to ¼" headphone adapter.
- A decent microphone, a mic stand (tabletop or floor depending on your setup), and XLR cable to plug the mic into the interface. A condenser microphone is preferred, but a dynamic or ribbon mic will also work. Here's a few good options:
 - Audio-Technica AT2020
 - Sterling Audio ST151
 - MXL 990

Audio interfaces are in particularly short supply due to the pandemic so please consider obtaining one as soon as possible. BYO is placing a bulk order of Focusrite Scarlett Solo audio interfaces that will be available to BYO families at cost. Please email Chris (president@byoweb.org) if you'd like us to hold one for you. BYO will be posting instructions to the orchestra website on how to set up the hardware and configure and use the Jamulus client software early in September.

We expect to email offers out for musicians to enroll with the orchestra on Tuesday, August 25th. This is a separate (and much easier) enrollment from the Laney College process that many of you completed over the summer. Please contact Julia at manager@byoweb.org if you have any questions about the upcoming season or the enrollment process. We are all looking forward to an exciting season!

Sincerely,

Jay, Julia, & Chris