



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, August 26, 2020
Media kit and more in the [PYP Press Room](#)

YOUTH ORCHESTRAS AND COMPOSERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY COLLABORATE TO LAUNCH NEW YOUTH ORCHESTRA COMMISSIONING INITIATIVE

PORTLAND, OR – In response to the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, the Metropolitan Youth Symphony (MYS of Portland, OR), the New Jersey Youth Symphony (NJYS of New Providence, NJ), and the Portland Youth Philharmonic (PYP of Portland, OR) are teaming up and inviting youth orchestras across the country to take part in a new collaborative project. The **Youth Orchestra Commissioning Initiative (YOCl)**, designed to create remote performances of new works by women and composers of color, strives to connect young musicians with composers who will write new, short chamber music pieces for groups of diverse instrumentation to rehearse and perform from musicians' individual homes.

Interested youth orchestras may visit the YOCl's new website at youthorchestras.org to learn more and join the consortium.

This initiative is spearheaded by **Portland Youth Philharmonic**, the nation's first youth orchestra, and its Musical Director **David Hattner**. During the summer, PYP commissioned new music for their musicians to play over Zoom in the fall. "We've partnered with 14 incredible composers to create new works specifically designed for remote performance," says Hattner. "The Youth Orchestra Commissioning Initiative invites all youth orchestras to join. Orchestras will have access to all of the works in the consortium and are encouraged to commission new pieces themselves."

The **Metropolitan Youth Symphony** and its Music Director **Raúl Gómez** have commissioned new works by MYS alumna **Katie Palka**, American jazz violinist **Regina Carter**, Afghan folk-inspired composer **Seare Farhat**, and more as part of the project. MYS hopes to perform these new works sometime in early 2021. "MYS is thrilled to take part in this exciting and important initiative," shares **Gómez**. "We look forward to having our young musicians learn, record and enjoy brand new music created just for them by a wonderfully diverse and talented group of composers."

The **New Jersey Youth Symphony**, under the direction of **Helen H. Cha-Pyo** (Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts) is also working on new commissions for the 2020-2021 season.

A primary goal of this initiative is to address the systemic exclusion of composers of color and women from the standard classical repertoire, by showcasing new music produced under this

initiative composed primarily by professionals identifying with those groups. The current lineup of involved composers includes **Efraín Amaya**, **Laura Brackney**, **Regina Carter**, **Giancarlo Castro D'Addona**, **Darrell Grant**, **Deena T Grossman**, **Gustavo Larrea**, **Jessica Meyer**, **Polina Nazaykinskaya**, **Bernardo Quesada**, **James M. Stephenson**, and more. A full list of composers and their bios can be found at youthorchestras.org/composers-1.

The Youth Orchestra Commissioning Initiative aims to create new music written specifically for this socially distanced environment, with many of the initial compositions intended to be recorded separately and assembled as a video performance. Composers are tasked with considering the advantages (certain rhythmic interplay easier to coordinate) and disadvantages (rhythmical nuance nearly impossible) of this performance format.

“What I find most exciting about this project is that youth orchestra activities can continue [providing music education] during this crucial time of a young musician's development,” says New York City-based composer, performer, and educator **Jessica Meyer**, who has composed a piece for violas for the project. Meyer's first composer/performer portrait album recently debuted at #1 on the Billboard traditional classical chart.

“As an artist of color, I'm particularly appreciative that the YOCl is seeking out non-traditional composers, and engaging students with diverse musical and cultural vocabularies,” adds Portland, OR based professional jazz pianist and composer **Darrell Grant**. “Through my piece, I hope to encourage developing clarinetists to explore this important musical lineage and hopefully broaden their curiosity about the possibilities of the instrument.” In 2019, Grant was named Portland Jazz Master by PDX Jazz and was awarded a MAP Fund grant for his opera *Sanctuaries*. In 2020, he received the Governor's Arts Award, Oregon's highest arts honor.

Youth orchestras around the country are invited to join and add more composers to the project, sharing their commissioned pieces with all participating organizations. To join the consortium, an organization commits to commissioning at least one new composition, which will be added to the Initiative's music library. All members will have access to this library where they can connect with composers and rent a composition for just \$20. The Initiative will provide a contract template for commissioning new music, as well as the opportunity to meet the composers virtually.

Throughout the fall, orchestras will work on rehearsing and recording their new pieces remotely through Zoom or other video platforms. Composers in the Initiative will visit these rehearsals, giving the enrolled young musicians direct access to the creators of the music they are learning. Videographers will assemble the individual recordings into virtual ensemble performances of these new works.

For more information visit youthorchestras.org or email info@youthorchestras.org. More details, participating orchestras, composers, and performances dates will be added to the site as they become available.

Who:

Participating Youth Orchestras

- **Metropolitan Youth Symphony** (Portland, OR), Music Director Raúl Gómez
- **New Jersey Youth Symphony** (New Providence, NJ), Helen H. Cha-Pyo (Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts)
- **Portland Youth Philharmonic** (Portland, OR), Musical Director David Hattner

Participating Composers

- Efraín Amaya
- Lauren Bernofsky
- Laura Brackney
- Sergio Carreno
- Regina Carter
- Giancarlo Castro D'Addona
- Kate Davis
- Seare Farhat
- Darrell Grant
- Marcus Grant
- Deena T. Grossman
- Gustavo Larrea
- Jessica Meyer
- Polina Nazaykinskaya
- Keyla Orozco
- Katie Palka
- Bernardo Quesada
- Jeff Scott
- James M. Stephenson

What:

- Youth orchestras and composers across the country join together to launch the **Youth Orchestra Commissioning Initiative**.
- New works will be composed primarily by women and musicians of color.
- Musicians enrolled in participating orchestras will rehearse and record their parts remotely for video and audio compilation.

Where:

- All performances of these new works will take place virtually via the internet during the fall semester. Dates coming soon.
- Interested youth orchestras and composers may visit youthorchestras.org to join or learn more.