



September 1, 2020

Dear Friend of Youth and Music:

Like all arts organizations and schools, the Grand Rapids Youth Symphony and Classical Orchestra is reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic. We haven't been together as an orchestra since March 9, 2020. All throughout the summer we've been making tentative plans on how to regroup as an orchestra. We knew that it would be unlikely that we could gather as our "normal" 100+ person orchestra, so we were planning on splitting up into of 25- to 30- person orchestras with the hope that when we eventually could gather in a large group, we could hit the ground running. However, by mid-August we knew that the Governor's orders limiting indoor gatherings to just 10 people doomed any of our plans. So . . . like virtually every other youth orchestra in the state, we've gone virtual for at least the first third of our season.

In spite of Zoom, and FaceTime, etc., it is currently *impossible* to rehearse together on-line. So we are in the process of devising "play-along" recordings for our musicians to practice with. We'll be holding online music history sessions and sectionals. And we're going to attempt to do one of those "compilations" in place of our first concert of the year. But there is no avoiding the fact that recording yourself with a metronome (by yourself) and then having a video editor combine your recording with lots of others is not what music making is all about. Music is all about making music together and sharing it together.

So, it's mild to say that the Grand Rapids Youth Symphony and Classical Orchestra is in a bit of a crisis. We've lost our rehearsal space (no public school is allowing anybody except their own students into their buildings). We've lost our performance space. Since we can't give concerts, we've lost our audience. (And parents and students are rightfully asking if the "virtual" experience is worth their enrollment fee!)

So, as we frantically try to keep the GRYS&CO afloat, your generous donation at this time is more critically important than ever. There is no doubt that our costs are going to skyrocket both in the near future as we operate virtually and when we come back together. You know that we are careful with every single penny that our friends give to us, and I make that same commitment to you again. Please, won't you help us weather this COVID storm? Thank you!

Sincerely,

John P. Varineau

Conductor, Grand Rapids Youth Symphony and Classical Orchestra

GRYS Manager: PO Box 8545, Kentwood MI 49518 616 842-6566
PO Box location: 1680 44th St SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508
300 Ottawa Ave. N.W. Suite 100, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503 616 454-9451