



April 6, 2021

Dear Colleague:

You may have heard that after 33 seasons with the Grand Rapids Youth Symphony (and 36 with the Grand Rapids Symphony) I'm retiring! As you well know from your own experience, making music with youthful musicians is a thrill that really can't be matched. I have been so blessed to be associated with music students who have gone on to successful careers as professional performers, conductors, composers and music educators. Other graduates from the Youth Symphony have chosen other paths: medicine, law, engineering, teaching, etc. (And let's not forget parenting.) I am so proud of the success of the Grand Rapids Youth Symphony and as I have repeatedly said, our success is a result of your work as music educators. Thank you!

Just because I'm leaving doesn't mean that the work of the Youth Symphony stops. The organization (and our parent organization, the Grand Rapids Symphony) is currently mapping out plans for both the short term and the long term. And so, I am asking once again for your help in steering your most talented students towards participating in the Grand Rapids Youth Symphony and Classical Orchestra. Just like your work, our work has taken something of a hit because of the COVID pandemic, so we are earnestly encouraging as many students to participate as possible. It is my hope that the Youth Symphony and your program can work together to keep music alive and thriving.

**Students will need to apply on-line at our website ([www.grys.org](http://www.grys.org)). Because of the pandemic, all auditions will be "virtual" by sending in videos. The deadline for the auditions and video submission is May 24.**

**We work hard to make sure that all of our students participate in their school music ensembles. It is a requirement for enrollment in the Grand Rapids Youth Symphony. I appreciate your willingness to make it possible for students to be active members of both the school ensembles and the Youth Symphony.**

Please encourage your most talented students to audition. This really is an exceptional program designed to inspire and challenge your best students. It is our hope that they take the excitement we engender back to their schools, and that your program is better because of us.

Sincerely,

John P. Varineau

Conductor, Grand Rapids Youth Symphony Orchestra (almost retired!)

Associate Conductor, Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra (almost retired!)