



April 6, 2021

Dear Friend of Youth and Music:

You may have heard that, after 33 years with the Grand Rapids Youth Symphony and Classical Orchestra (and 36 with the Grand Rapids Symphony), I'm retiring! There is no way that I can adequately describe the thrill of these past three-and-a-half decades of making music with talented, exciting young musicians. The memories are really fantastic!

This past year has been a "challenging" one for anybody involved in the performing arts. With the Youth Symphony and Classical Orchestra, ever since the shut-down in March, 2020, we haven't been able to present "live" performances (yet!). Even our auditions in the summer were virtual. Starting in the autumn of 2020 our "rehearsals" were virtual. This really forced me to "up-my-game" in the technology field. I had to learn all about Zoom and making practice recordings in order to stitch together a virtual performance (which I'm still trying to master). Then, finally in February 2021, we started having "live" rehearsals, thanks to the generosity of DeVos Place. (We lost our rehearsal space at City High School. No school district is allowing outside groups in!). About 15% of our students are still joining us "virtually" and at the live rehearsals we are all spaced apart by six feet. This is far from optimal, because we can't hear each other very well, but at least we are making music together, **live**. We are hope, hope, hoping that we will be able to present some sort of live performance on May 16—my last day with the Grand Rapids Youth Symphony and the Grand Rapids Symphony.

Before I retire, I do want to thank you for your generosity in supporting the Grand Rapids Youth Symphony and Classical Orchestra. I must attribute the success of the program these many years to the generosity of people like you. And I've been so very proud of how we have handled our finances in such a way that we have managed the pandemic, financially, really quite well.

But now, as one of my "final acts" with the Youth Symphony, I am asking once again for your financial support. This time your support will help ensure the success of the program as we chart new territory. Please help me give the new conductor—as yet not selected—a good solid financial footing to keep the Grand Rapids Youth Symphony and Classical Orchestra thriving. Thank you!

Sincerely,

John P. Varineau

Conductor, Grand Rapids Youth Symphony and Classical Orchestra

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