



March 25, 2022

Dear Colleague:

It has been my pleasure and privilege to lead the Grand Rapids Youth Symphony and Classical Orchestra as Interim Conductor this season. Working with these talented students after many months of pandemic-imposed limitations and returning to concert halls to perform music together has been an inspiring and rewarding experience!

This winter, the Grand Rapids Symphony announced a search for a new Assistant Conductor and Director of the Youth Orchestras which yielded applications from across the globe. The finalists will work with our orchestra in May and the winner will join the GRS next season. We are very excited for the caliber of applicants and thrilled for the future of this program.

I would like to bring to your attention several highlights and changes to our program:

- 1) Rehearsal space – we have moved weekly rehearsals to Northview Performing Arts Auditorium, which allows the Youth Orchestra to rehearse on stage, more reflective of professional organizations
- 2) Grand Rapids Symphony Sectionals – each concert cycle, Grand Rapids Symphony musicians have been coaching sectionals with both our orchestras
- 3) Michigan State University String Fellows – in collaboration with MSU, several Graduate Students work with our string sections multiple times per season
- 4) Visiting Conductors – our students get opportunities to play under other conductors during the year, including Marcelo Lehninger, Music Director of the Grand Rapids Symphony
- 5) Professional Level Repertoire - the Youth Symphony and Classical Orchestra perform challenging standard works that professional orchestras perform, including
 - a. Mussorgsky, Pictures at an Exhibition (Youth Symphony)
 - b. Mahler, Totenfeier (Youth Symphony)
 - c. Mozart, Symphony No. 1 (Classical Orchestra)
- 6) New and Diverse Programming – we are actively broadening the repertoire and including works by living composers as well as underrepresented minorities:
 - a. Polina Nazaykinskaya, Fenix (Youth Symphony)
 - b. Joseph de Bologne, Symphony Op. 11 No. 2 (Classical Orchestra) – a French composer that was the son of a plantation owner and one of his slaves!

In just one year, I can see that this Youth Orchestra is a historically exceptional program designed to inspire and challenge our blossoming students. And yet, this organization cannot put on concerts of this caliber without your dedication and support. The Youth Orchestras are comprised of your students playing professional level music with incredible dedication, passion, and energy! Please encourage all qualified students to audition.

We hope that the experience of playing in this program stays with these kids throughout their lives and benefits those around them as well. Given the alarming state of current events, our responsibility to connect and inspire people of all ages and backgrounds is more important than ever.

Sincerely,

Yaniv Segal

Interim Conductor, Grand Rapids Youth Symphony Orchestra

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