



MEMBER AND PARENT HANDBOOK

Christopher Hisey, Music Director
Beth Ulman, Executive Director
P.O. Box 645, Fairfield, CT 06824
(203) 293-8447
<https://gctyo.org>

Welcome to GCTYO!

Young people achieve amazing things at GCTYO. They develop their talents beyond what they thought possible and feel pride and joy in their accomplishments. Greater Connecticut Youth Orchestras' holistic approach to music education means we inspire and challenge students at every stage of their music development. The study and performance of great music in an ensemble setting can be a transformative experience for young musicians, and the skills they learn as part of a GCTYO ensemble—teamwork, perseverance and responsibility—carry over into all areas of their lives.

GCTYO has provided advanced music education and performance opportunities to exceptionally motivated young musicians since 1961. It has grown from a single orchestra to more than a dozen distinct ensembles with more than 300 musicians in grades 5-12 from all over Connecticut today. GCTYO provides a developmentally sequential program of orchestras for string, brass, woodwind, and percussion musicians. In addition, there are two Jazz Orchestras, a Flute Choir, a Percussion Orchestra and a Chamber Orchestra comprised of the top musicians from Principal Orchestra, as well as a Chamber Music program in collaboration with Stamford Symphony. A no audition, no experience necessary Steel Pan Orchestra program was launched in 2021. A full range of professional education, coaching, and conducting by a staff of experienced music professionals, all of whom are teachers, supports these ensembles. Through rehearsals and formal concert performances, GCTYO's young musicians gain an appreciation for many types of music, valuable performing experience, and an important sense of achievement.

Our Mission

Greater Connecticut Youth Orchestras (GCTYO) brings young musicians together to achieve the highest standard of music performance in a welcoming, inclusive, and safe environment. Our holistic approach to education fosters growth, learning, confidence, and both social and emotional awareness, which prepares students for a full and balanced life.

Our Core Values

- Diversity – Reflecting the communities we serve
- Community – Providing an accepting place for kids to be themselves
- Dedication – Encouraging commitment to each other as we work to achieve a common goal
- Inspiration – Empowering our young people to soar to new heights

GENERAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

MEMBERSHIP FEES

Membership fees vary by ensemble. Other fees include retreat fees and snack fees. Payment, in part or in full, is due at first rehearsal. Each sibling after the first receives a \$100 reduction in fee.

No qualified student is turned away because of inability to pay. Financial aid forms are available on the GCTYO website. If financial assistance is requested, a completed form, most recent tax return and \$25 application fee are due at first rehearsal. Awards are based on the income levels associated with the National School Lunch Program. Snack and retreat fees are included in financial aid packages. Scholarships are available; details are available on the website.

GCTYO offers an installment plan of three payments. Only checks or cash are accepted for the installment plan, which also includes a processing charge of \$10 (\$5 for each of 2nd and 3rd payments). In order for students to receive their music and be seated in their respective orchestras, the first payment must be received at the first rehearsal. The second payment is due in October and the third payment is due in November. All membership fees must be paid in full prior to the Fall Concert or the student may not be permitted to perform at the Fall Concert.

Members who withdraw before October 1 of any season will have their ensemble fee, minus a \$25 handling fee, refunded upon request. Members who withdraw or become ineligible to participate in GCTYO on or after October 1 will not receive a refund.

GOOD STANDING

GCTYO expects its members to remain in good standing as participants in their respective school music programs, where they exist. "Good standing" is determined by the school program. Conflicts between school music activities and those of GCTYO should be brought to the conductors' attention as soon as possible. School music activities always take precedence over GCTYO activities.

ATTENDANCE

GCTYO members are expected to attend all rehearsals and performances that are published in the GCTYO calendar. If an orchestra member must miss a rehearsal, the ensemble conductor must be notified in advance if possible (not the executive director). Contact information is at the end of this handbook.

Excessive absences by a student will result in the player's exclusion from the concert performance. Attendance at dress rehearsals is mandatory. A student who is absent from the dress rehearsal may not be allowed to perform in the concert.

Each player in an orchestra is important. There are only a few acceptable reasons for missing a performance. A student who misses a concert may be dropped from the orchestra or may be moved back in the section. The consequences of excessive absences and/or missed dress rehearsals/concerts are at the discretion of the member's conductor in consultation with the Music Director.

GCTYO makes every effort to avoid conflicts when the GCTYO calendar is formulated. We plan around school vacations, religious holidays, CMEA auditions, and music festivals. We ask our members to pay attention to our calendar and avoid conflicts on their end as much as possible.

TARDINESS

GCTYO members are expected to be in their assigned seats with their instruments tuned and ready to play at the scheduled beginning of rehearsal. If the rehearsal begins at 9:00 am and the member arrives in the building at 9:00 am, the member is LATE! Three late arrivals constitute an absence. Conductors have the discretion to change seating or dismiss members who are perpetually late.

CELL PHONE USAGE

GCTYO members are allowed to use cell phones only during refreshment breaks or with the expressed permission of a GCTYO staff member. Any member who abuses this privilege may expect to have the cell phone confiscated until the completion of the rehearsal or performance. Members who repeatedly violate the policy may be dismissed from GCTYO.

Students may bring cell phones to rehearsal but the phone must be left in the student's instrument case during rehearsals and sectionals. Students found to have cell phones on them during rehearsals will get one warning. They will be asked to put the phone in their case. If students are found to have their cell phone a second time, the phone will be confiscated and will not be returned directly to the student. Only a parent will be able to retrieve the phone.

Exceptions will be made for students who use their cell phone to monitor a medical condition. A signed note from a parent will be required.

Students will be allowed to check their phones during break, but we will encourage them to leave their phones in their case while in the snack area. We want our students to be social, not staring at their phones.

In the event of an emergency requiring you to get in touch with your child immediately, you may call or text the Executive Director (203-209-4255), or your child's conductor, and we will relay your message and have your child contact you.

PERSONAL BEHAVIOR & BULLYING

GCTYO members are expected to maintain a personal standard of character and conduct which will be a credit to themselves, their parents, schools and communities. Students are expected to preserve and contribute to the wholesome atmosphere of devoted work and serious performance which distinguishes GCTYO. GCTYO members whose personal behavior at any level brings discredit to the organization may be subject to disciplinary action.

GCTYO students must abide by GCTYO's Anti-Bullying Contract as part of their membership in the organization:

Anti-Bullying Contract Student and Parent/Guardian Agreement

Everyone has the right to feel physically and emotionally safe at Greater Connecticut Youth Orchestras (GCTYO). Bullying is defined as intentionally aggressive behavior that can take many forms (verbal, physical, social, emotional, or cyber - or any combination of these); it involves an imbalance of power and is often repeated over time. The bullying can consist of one child bullying another or a group of children bullying another child or group of children.

Every member of GCTYO should enjoy it equally, and feel safe, secure, and accepted regardless of color, race, gender, popularity, musical ability, intelligence, religion, or nationality. Bullying can be pushing, shoving, hitting, and spitting, as well as name calling, picking on, making fun of, laughing at, or excluding someone. Bullying causes pain and stress to victims and is never justified or excusable as 'kids being kids,' 'just teasing,' or any other rationalization. The victim is never responsible for being a target of bullying.

Student's responsibility: As a member of the GCTYO community, I will do everything I can personally to create and preserve a physically and emotionally safe environment. I will strive to treat everyone with respect regardless of any differences. I commit that I will not bully my peers. If I witness bullying, I will report it to the Conductor of my ensemble or to the Music Director of GCTYO.

Parent/Guardian's responsibility: I commit to encouraging my child to always respect others. I will also respect all other adults (parents and staff) at GCTYO. I have instructed my child not to bully. I have advised my child to report any bullying to the Conductor of my child's ensemble or to the Music Director of GCTYO.

***I understand that bullying may result in immediate expulsion from
GCTYO.***

PROPERTY

GCTYO strives to operate in a safe and effective manner and to be a responsible tenant at rented facilities. All members, families, employees and volunteers are expected to observe safety rules and show respect for the building, its occupants and its equipment. Note that our rehearsals take place in a public school. We are guests of the school and the school district. Students should be respectful of their surroundings and not touch or move anything that is part of the school unless asked to do so by a staff member or adult volunteer. Students are not allowed to wander around the building before, during or after rehearsal. They should go directly to their own practice rooms, the restrooms, or snack area. Elevators are to be used only by cello, bass, and baritone sax players, or if a student has difficulty walking or using stairs.

RULES OF CONDUCT IN THE REHEARSAL SPACE

Parents - Make sure your kids have read and understand these rules and act respectfully during their entire time at GCTYO.

1. Wandering around the building is strictly forbidden. Students should take the shortest route possible to their rehearsal and break spaces and may not go anywhere else.
2. Do not touch any property in the building. This includes white boards, bulletin boards, trash and recycling cans, items on desks, and any items in rooms or spaces that do not belong to GCTYO.
3. Food & drinks (snacks or lunch; exception is water) may not be carried or consumed anywhere in the building except the cafeteria. This includes hallways and the lobby. Afternoon ensemble musicians who need to eat before rehearsal must do it outside or in the cafeteria.
4. All students must go to the cafeteria with their group for break, even if they do not want snack. No students may remain in classrooms or hallways without adult supervision.
5. If a student is not picked up immediately after their rehearsal ends, they are to remain in the lobby until a parent or guardian arrives. Please be aware of your child's end time and arrive on time to pick them up.
6. Obey posted signs in the cafeteria, lobby and hallways.
7. Only students carrying a bass, cello, Bari sax or tuba, or an injured student, may use the elevator.

RESTROOM POLICY

At GCTYO, we believe that everyone should be able to use the restroom that aligns with their gender identity. Nobody should feel anxious or unsafe using a restroom, and nobody should have to go way out of their way to find one. Our restroom policy is gender-inclusive: Everyone is welcome to use the restroom that aligns with their gender identity.

CONCERT ATTIRE

Everyone wears ALL BLACK. Attire should be "business casual."

Acceptable attire includes: Long-sleeved black dress shirt (crew neck or collared, with or without buttons), black dress pants or ankle-length black skirt or long-sleeved black dress, black socks or stockings, and black dress shoes. If pants have belt loops, a black dress belt should be worn. Suit jackets and ties are not required, but are acceptable if black.

ABSOLUTELY NO t-shirts, jeans, leggings, leotards, or sneakers! Concert dress should look professional. Arms, legs, and ankles must be fully covered. Shoes must also be black.

Steel Pan only

Black long pants & short-sleeved polo shirt, preferably in a shade of purple, light blue, or pink. White or navy blue also okay.

MUSIC POLICY

All music and folders are the property of GCTYO and are maintained in a library for continuing use. At the first rehearsal, each orchestra member is issued a folder

containing music. The number on each piece of music should match the folder number. GCTYO music should remain in the GCTYO folder at all times, and it should not be folded or wrinkled. Any marks on the music must be made in pencil. It is the orchestra member's responsibility to maintain the music in good condition. Students who do not return the folder or music at the end of the year will be charged up to \$50 for replacement.

REHEARSAL CHANGES/CANCELLATIONS

GCTYO makes every effort to maintain the schedule and calendar distributed at the beginning of the season. However, unforeseen events can cause disruptions. In the event of weather complications, please know that we value members' safety above all else. If you think that rehearsal may be cancelled because of weather, check your email, the GCTYO website (www.GCTYO.org) and GCTYO Facebook page after 7:00 am. Decisions regarding cancellations/delays are generally made by that hour. You will be emailed regarding any change, provided GCTYO has your correct email address. Because GCTYO draws from a wide geographic area, the weather may not be the same throughout. Should rehearsal be held and you think that the weather in your area compromises your safety, please let your conductor know that you are not coming.

Rehearsal changes that can be anticipated will be announced as early as possible. Changes will be posted on the website, Facebook and Instagram, and members will be emailed.

DISMISSAL FROM REHEARSAL

Families are expected to pick up their children at the designated dismissal time from rehearsals, retreats and concerts. If a student cannot be picked up exactly at dismissal time, the Executive Director and conductor should be notified. The student should wait in the lobby area until a driver arrives. Note that GCTYO is not a babysitting service. Children who are not members of GCTYO should never be left at rehearsal unattended and student musicians should not be picked up more than 15 minutes after a rehearsal, concert or social activity ends. Under no circumstances should students wander around the building or the neighborhood after a GCTYO activity! Students who are unattended and not where they are supposed to be will be given a warning. If the behavior is repeated, the student will be asked to leave the program.

RETREATS

GCTYO provides each ensemble with an annual retreat or social activity early in the season. Just as with regular rehearsals, attendance is mandatory. The purpose of the retreats is two-fold: A period of intense rehearsals, coupled with recreational activities, immensely improves the quality of the musical performances during the season. The social activities and rest periods give students the opportunity to get to know each other and bond into a cohesive group with common interests and goals. Retreats are held off-site so that they feel special. Retreat Permission Slips and Waivers must be submitted in order for musicians to participate.

COMMUNICATION

Most communication from GCTYO to families is by email. Be sure you provide up-to-date, accurate email addresses. If you are not receiving at least one email per week from GCTYO, then you may not be on the list or there may be an error with your email address. If that's the case, contact the Executive Director at GCTYO@GCTYO.org or call (203) 293-8447.

The website, www.GCTYO.org, is the other most important form of communication. Before asking staff or conductors, please check the website. Your question may easily be answered from the extensive information available there. Information such as the calendar, concert schedule, important forms, policies, trips and more can be found on the website. Other communication is done at the three parent meetings per season or at concerts.

HOW CAN I HELP GCTYO?

GCTYO has many volunteer opportunities for families of members, and in fact could not function without volunteers. Please consider getting involved! To volunteer, talk to any Board member or email the Executive Director at executivedirector@GCTYO.org. Please let us know how you want to help.

CONCERTS

The Concert Committee is responsible for smooth operations on concert days, including recruiting and training volunteers. This committee also sells flowers and apparel at concerts.

CONTRIBUTIONS & ADVERTISING

Ads and "shout-outs" to musicians are sold and printed in all three regular concert program booklets and sometimes additional special programs. These ads provide another source of income for the organization. If you own your own business, consider advertising in the programs which reach up to 1,400 people each concert. Or ask stores or businesses that you frequent to purchase an ad. You'd be surprised at how easy it is!

Personal donations are always welcome and also acknowledged in the program booklets. The Internal Revenue Service recognizes GCTYO as a 501(c)(3) organization, and all donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. Please check with your employer about matching contributions. GCTYO also participates in the online Fairfield County Giving Day each year in March. **Give by Oct. 15 to appear in the Fall Concert program book.**

FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

GCTYO generally undertakes one to two major fundraising activities each season. *A chairperson and numerous volunteers are need for each.* These organized fundraising activities provide additional program support funds. Regular fundraisers include wrapping gifts and performing at Barnes & Noble and a Silent Auction. GCTYO also sells apparel throughout the year and flowers at concerts. Other ideas are welcome.

GRANTS AND SPONSORSHIPS

GCTYO actively pursues corporate grants and sponsorships. We are most grateful that the Stratford Masonic Fraternity has underwritten a GCTYO Concert for many years. Concert sponsorship for the remaining two concerts is available. Other major contributors include the Jack Lawrence Trust, the Daniel E. Offutt III Memorial Trust, Jones Foundation, Carstensen Foundation, Kashulon Foundation, County Assemblies, and the Connecticut Office of the Arts, Dept. of Economic and Community Development, as well as numerous corporate sponsors. If you are aware of other companies or foundations which might grant funds to GCTYO, please email the Executive Director at ExecutiveDirector@GCTYO.org, call our voicemail at 203-293-8447 or mention it to any Board member. **GCTYO's exclusive Media Sponsor is WSHU Public Radio, 91.1FM.**

OPEN REHEARSAL

GCTYO holds two Open Rehearsals each year for interested students, parents and teachers: one in fall and another in spring. Attendees can observe all the ensembles in rehearsal, learn more about the organization and obtain audition information. Volunteers are always needed to give "tours" and answer questions. Refreshments are provided as well. New prospective members may audition after the fall Open Rehearsal and throughout the year if space is available.

REHEARSAL REFRESHMENTS

Volunteers are needed each rehearsal week to serve snacks. It's a great way to get to know GCTYO and other families. Please remember to sign up at least once during the year! Email snack@GCTYO.org to contact the Snack Coordinator.

STUDENT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES & STAGE CREW

Many volunteer opportunities with GCTYO are available to students, including weekly stage crew, mailings, and helping at concerts and events. Please email GCTYO@GCTYO.org to volunteer. Stage crew is staffed by students, supervised by several adults. Stage crew is responsible for setting up and putting away chairs, stands and percussion for weekly rehearsals and helping at special concerts if needed. Stage crew students form a special bond and contribute immeasurably to the organization. Students who are seniors and have volunteered on stage crew for at least one year prior to their senior year may choose to get paid for stage crew in lieu of volunteer hours.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors, with the support of parent volunteers, manages the affairs of GCTYO. The Board consists of officers and directors elected by GCTYO parents. Fundraising, hospitality and community-building, and policy-setting are just a few of the many areas in which the Board provides valuable leadership. If you are interested in becoming a Board Member, contact president@GCTYO.org or any other Board Member.

President	president@GCTYO.org
Vice President	1stvp@GCTYO.org
Second Vice President	2ndvp@GCTYO.org
Secretary	secretary@GCTYO.org
Treasurer	treasurer@GCTYO.org

Please email your conductor in advance if you will be absent from a rehearsal. No need to copy the Executive Director! Emails about attendance should go directly to conductors. Contact information is under Contact on our website.

CALENDAR

The full calendar is available on the website at <https://gctyo.org/events/> and can easily be added to personal cell phones. In addition, the calendar is available in a downloadable PDF format. Please put all the dates into your personal calendars. If a change is made to the schedule, it will be announced by email and posted under the Calendar tab on the website, and a new calendar will be posted. We make every effort to avoid changes but sometimes they are unavoidable.

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE- Ensembles meet at different times. **Be sure to drop your musician off at least 15 minutes prior to the start of rehearsal.**