



## Member Handbook 2025-2026

The NKU Youth Symphony Orchestra provides full orchestra experience to area youth who excel in string, wind, brass, percussion and piano studies, exposing them to orchestral literature and ensemble playing in a challenging and nurturing environment.

NKU YSO meets weekly on the campus of Northern Kentucky University in the School of the Arts building. NKU YSO is under the leadership and direction of Mr. Caleb Robinson, an expert orchestral conductor and music educator. NKU YSO is part of the award winning NKU Music Preparatory Program and is designed to prepare students for a future in music.

**Rehearsals:** Tuesdays, 6:30–8pm

**Location:** Fine Arts room 126

**Tuition:** \$325 for the academic year (September–April)

**Prerequisites:** Audition and acceptance required. Grades 7–12, suggested 4+ years playing experience, yearly entrance and placement audition is required. As a reference point, a level of playing equivalent to Suzuki Book III or beyond is recommended for string players. Winds, brass, and percussion: at least 2 years playing in a daily band program.

**Membership Requirements:** The conductor's goal is to make rehearsals meaningful for all involved. While performances often provide the most memorable highlights of the year, our rehearsals reveal who we are as an ensemble – our musical maturity and dedication, our respect for one another, and our ability to work together intensively. Extraordinary responsibility is placed on each musician for preparation of individual parts. Both conductor and ensemble members are expected to diligently prepare for rehearsals and arrive ready to contribute at their highest level. It is important that students and parents are familiar with and understand the policies set forth in this handbook. Failure to observe them could result in a reassignment of chair, denial of permission to participate in a concert, or dismissal from the orchestra.

**Tuition:** Annual tuition for participation in NKU YSO (upon audition and acceptance) is \$325. This tuition must be paid within one week of acceptance into YSO. Members may not participate until their tuition has been paid in full or financial arrangements have been made.

**Punctuality:** Students must be in their seats and ready to play no less than five minutes before the start of each rehearsal. A call time will be specified for performances. The same expectation applies to a virtual meeting.



**Attendance Policy:** Attendance is mandatory for all rehearsals and performances. Our attendance policy is strict to ensure the highest quality learning experience and performance. Please evaluate your schedule to be sure that you are able to meet the expected ensemble commitments. No more than three absences per year are allowed. Students may use the absences for sickness, school concerts, vacations, or other acceptable and unavoidable conflicts. After three absences, the student **may** be dismissed. ***For an absence to be excused, you must submit the Absence Form in the NKU YSO Virtual Classroom.***

**Performance Absences:** Members are required to participate in all concerts. The conductor and Music Preparatory Department administration must approve any performance absence, unless the absence is due to sudden illness or death of an immediate family member. Missing a performance is very serious and doing so is grounds for probation or immediate dismissal from the program.

**Withdrawal or Dismissal from the YSO:** Members are expected to make a full season's commitment to the YSO. Early withdrawal from the program must be done by letter, indicating the reasons and circumstances for withdrawal. No refund of tuition will be extended.

**Audition Policies:** The purpose of auditions is to determine whether an auditionee is best suited for the YSO, and likewise whether the YSO is best suited for the auditionee. In addition, auditions serve as a seating audition which determines an arrangement that is for the good of the entire orchestra. The following are standardized policies that will be followed:

Seating auditions will take place during the middle of each semester. All students must audition unless otherwise instructed. The YSO conductor, section coaches, or other professional musicians will conduct auditions and their notes/comments are private and will not be shared with students or parents. Seating will then be determined at the conductor's discretion. Based on the audition, violinists will be assigned to the Violin I or Violin II section and may remain in that section for the entire season. The conductor may determine exceptions to the preceding and assign students to rotate between the two sections. The conductor has the final say in all seating decisions. The goal for seating is not to foster competition, but to find the optimum placement for each student that will ensure the success of each individual and the group as a whole. All members of the orchestra may on occasion change seating as the conductor sees fit in order to benefit the entire ensemble.

**Concert Dress (all items solid black):**

**Option 1:**

- Dress with sleeves (floor length)
- Formal skirt (floor length)
- Dress pants/trousers
- Dress Shirt w/  $\frac{3}{4}$  sleeves
- Black/natural hose
- Dress shoes (Preferably flats)
- Optional Blazer

**Option 2:**

- Dress pants
- Long sleeve, button up dress shirt
- Tall socks
- Dress shoes
- Optional Tux/Blazer Jacket
- Optional Tie/Bowtie

*Note: Any member who is not in compliance with the dress code, as determined by the conductor, he or she will not be permitted to participate in said performance.*



**School Music Programs/Private Lesson Requirement:** Participation in the NKU YSO is designed to enhance, not replace, school music instruction. School music programs provide essential daily ensemble and rehearsal instruction required for serious musical progress. Students who enroll in the NKU YSO are required to participate in their school orchestra/band on the same instrument, if one exists. If there is not a school band or orchestra program for the student to participate in, the student is required to take private lessons on the instrument that he or she plays in the YSO program. Our program is not designed to be a student's sole source of instrumental instruction. The YSO believes that school music programs are vital to the development of young musicians – educationally, artistically and socially. By participating in school music programs, young musicians can serve as role models, receive leadership training and share their talents with others. School programs also provide other important opportunities such as access to All-State Band/Orchestras, Solo and Ensemble Assessments and performing in school productions. When extenuating circumstances prevail which may prohibit or make students' participation difficult in their school music programs, a student may petition the conductor for an exemption.

**Personal Injury or Damage to Instrument:** If a student sustains an injury that prevents him or her from playing an instrument, or if the instrument is being repaired, attendance is still required at rehearsals. It is beneficial to sit in the section while following along with the music, making any notations given by the conductor.

**Equipment:** Each musician is responsible for maintaining his/her instrument in top performing condition. Oil, rosin, mutes, shoulder rests, extra reeds and strings should be brought to each rehearsal. Every musician is expected to come to rehearsal with a pencil and eraser. There will be many musical suggestions and modifications to the music through the course of every rehearsal.

**Behavior:** YSO members are required to treat all rehearsal and performance venues and all equipment in the buildings with utmost care and respect. All members are required to behave appropriately while representing the orchestra. Disrespectful behavior of any kind during a concert or rehearsal may result in dismissal from the orchestra. All orchestra members are expected to maintain a professional manner at all times.

**Rehearsal Etiquette:** All electronic devices must be silenced prior to rehearsal. Cell phones are not permitted in the rehearsal space and must be put away in purses or instrument cases during rehearsal, apart from break time. Students who are texting or otherwise engaged with their phones or other electronic devices during rehearsal time are subject to dismissal from the rehearsal. Dress rehearsals, despite the name, **do not** require concert dress.

**Zero Tolerance Policy:** The YSO does not tolerate negative comments or behavior regarding race, ethnicity, political stance, sexual orientation or religious affiliation at any time. Such negative comments or behavior will result in immediate dismissal from the orchestra. The use of any illegal substances including tobacco, drugs and alcohol is also not permitted. Those in violation are subject to immediate dismissal from the YSO program.



# Parent / Student Contract:

We, \_\_\_\_\_ (student name)  
and \_\_\_\_\_ (parent name) have read the contents of the  
NKU Youth Symphony Orchestra Handbook and consent to its enforcement. We recognize the  
responsibility made to the YSO and promise to follow through to the best of our abilities. In  
addition, we have cross-checked the YSO calendar dates for the academic year with our personal  
schedules, school band/orchestra schedules, fall/spring breaks, sports schedules, and any other  
current commitments to ensure that YSO rehearsal and concert dates are a priority and will not be  
compromised.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

*This form is due upon arrival at your audition.*

