

## 2022 IMPACT REPORT



## **OUR MISSION**

Boston Youth Symphony Orchestras' (BYSO) mission is to encourage artistic excellence in a nurturing environment by providing the highest quality orchestral training and performance opportunities to qualified musicians, grades K–12, while making its programs accessible to underrepresented youth through financial aid and outreach.

**EXCELLENCE:** BYSO believes high-quality music experiences have a long-lasting impact on young musicians and audience members. Quality is at the heart of BYSO's programs, supported by the finest musicians in the area who serve as our faculty, coaches and conductors.

ACCESS: BYSO makes quality music experiences available to all young people, regardless of social or economic disadvantage. Our Intensive Community Program (ICP) offers rigorous string and winds training to Boston's underserved communities, preparing students

for competitive auditions into BYSO orchestras. BYSO provides use of an instrument, weekly lessons and support for participation in the orchestras from the time a student joins the program (age 5 or 6) until they graduate high school. The program serves 80–90 students annually.

**INSPIRATION:** Alongside training young musicians, we are dedicated to cultivating young audiences. Each year, BYSO presents more than 20 performances in some of Boston's finest venues including Symphony Hall and Sanders Theatre at Harvard University. Through our free ticketing programs and community concerts, BYSO welcomes thousands of young community members annually. BYSO's partnership with Boston Symphony Orchestra, BYSO/BSO: Partnering for the Future, sees children as young as 3 years old enjoy the magic of classical music.



## THANK YOU



This past season has been a success for BYSO on so many levels. Our return to in-person rehearsals and concerts was triumphant for our student musicians and audience members alike. As ever, these young people showed us how to move forward. It was inspiring to see them working with and learning from their coaches and peers once again. Like many of you, I joined fellow BYSO families and BYSO "fans" to enjoy live music. We also saw our community come together to support the important work that we do together — creating transformative musical opportunities for **all children**.

As the pandemic progressed, BYSO implemented strong health protocols to keep our families and staff safe, nimbly rescheduled concerts to contend with the unpredictability of this time, and ensured that our children could make music together safely, meaningfully, and joyfully.

As President of the BYSO Board of Directors, and a proud BYSO parent, I thank you for your support in making this season a success. Because of you, we deepen our impact throughout the community and continue to create pathways of excellence, promote personal growth, and **make music together.** 

Please read on to see our incredible season highlights as we returned to the stage and welcomed new members to our community. I hope that you will celebrate with us in our season's success and join us as we look towards a bright future! We thank you for being a part of the BYSO family.

Margaret Chen

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President, BYSO Board of Directors

"When we started again, we didn't know what we were going to find. In the life of a child or very young adult, a year and a half is a long time. I think the main thing we saw, is how much they WANTED to play. There is no question about it. The speed and curve of growth was steep — in a good sense. Because they really wanted to.

It's a lesson for us. It shows how much it meant for them. And it means that we have a responsibility. These kids invest a lot, and they may come from different starting points, but the common denominator is that they want to play.

As a conductor, I could sense all of this. When I talk to the other conductors, they felt the same things — even those who worked with the younger kids. Making music together is a special type of activity and emotion.



They wanted to play... they really wanted to play. And it can sound empty and rhetorical — but actually, it was tangible."

-Federico Cortese, Music Director

## TOGETHER AGAIN



BYSO students reunited at New England Music Camp in Sydney, Maine for two weeks of music making, forming friendships, and activities as they prepared music for concerts in the upcoming season.



Alumna Genevieve Lefevre '15 joined BYSO's top-level orchestra, Boston Youth Symphony (BYS) as the narrator for their performance of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* in Boston Symphony Hall as part of the BYSO / BSO Partnering for the Future.

#### **AUGUST, 2021**

#### **OCTOBER 17, 2021**

Music Director, Federico Cortese conducted Boston Youth Symphony at the season's opening concert at Boston Symphony Hall. This was BYSO's first in-person concert since the 2019–2020 season and featured students in our two most advanced ensembles, Boston Youth Symphony and Repertory Orchestra



#### **NOVEMBER 13, 2021**

#### **DECEMBER 12, 2021**

Members of BYSO's Intensive Community Program (ICP) presented the annual holiday concert featuring holiday favorites, festive decorations, and a sing-along!





We returned to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston to celebrate the transformation and resilience of our students at the 2022 BYSO Gala. We heard performances from our oldest to our youngest musicians and listened to powerful stories from alumni and current BYSO students. We raised over \$275,000 to support our annual operations and continue to provide programming for our students.

MARCH 26, 2022 APRIL 10, 2022

Our young musicians and opera singers received a standing ovation for their performance of Verdi's *La Traviata* in Boston Symphony Hall. This production featured BYS musicians alongside renowned professional singers from across the world.



#### **APRIL 23, 2022**

Over 100 young musicians of BYSO's Young People's String Orchestra (YPSO) and members of the Intensive Community Program presented a stunning concert with magician Matt Roberts. Families from all over the region attended this Boston Symphony Hall performance featuring the combination of music and magic.







"This past season at BYSO has been refreshing. I was energized to come back to this space where we make music and form friendships—we hadn't experienced this for a long time. Coming back in person allowed me to remember and think more deeply about why we play music.

I was so excited to return to in-person programming and go back to camp, but I was nervous about all the new players joining as well as playing without the old players who had just graduated. I was worried about the quality of the orchestra after not playing together in-person for a year and a half. When we sat down to play in the first rehearsal, I was surprised by how good the orchestra sounded and realized I had almost forgotten how an orchestra sounds. As soon as we played, we connected immediately and it didn't seem like we had just spent a year and a half without playing together in person. I felt like BYSO was back.

This year, I was able to play my concerto competition performance of Tchaikovsky's "Variations on a Rococo Theme", Op. 33. When I won the concerto competition in 2019, I was absolutely blown away. I was a week and a half away from my concerto performance when it was canceled because of COVID-19. Playing it two years later meant I was able to relearn what I had forgotten. I took sections that I had worked on before and made them better. I also completely forgot the challenges of some parts of the piece and had to figure them out again. Although I was nervous, presenting this piece that had been a big part of the journey towards playing together again was a transformative and memorable experience.

For me, the BYSO community is a really special place and I have so many close friends that came from my time here. BYSO is such a different environment than school or other programs—it's a home. You connect over music, but it is the people and the experiences that make everyone care and put the effort into making music together."

## MAKING MUSIC TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY

"Before this season started, I was nervous about not only COVID-19, but where the students were in their musical development. For almost two years, our students learned virtually at BYSO. Although we are so fortunate to be able to learn virtually and make music safely, many of the important musical experiences and details that are fundamental to playing were lost. As we started the 2021-2022 season, we started the important work of regaining that crucial time and personal instruction face-to-face.

For my BYSO students, who are younger and newer to music, coming back to creating music in-person created a mix of emotions. Many of my students in Preparatory Winds (PW) had never heard the sound of other instruments playing with them in an ensemble. Their musical journey began virtually, so playing with other musicians and instruments was a brand-new experience. For other students, it was beautiful to see how excited they were to be together with their friends after a long time apart. Our students, parents, and faculty



quickly realized how important this community is and how much we missed playing music together in-person.

The most impactful memory I have from this season is from the first Intensive Community Program Winds (ICP Winds) performance at the ICP Holiday Concert. This was the first time that all of these students had played together in over a year and a half. From the beginning of the season, the students worked hard and made so much progress together. At this concert, many students in the new ICP class were watching the performance and you could feel how excited they were to create this special moment together. Despite all the shifting protocols and the last-minute changes to our performances, the students were so flexible, resilient, and grateful to have the opportunity to play together—made everything the BYSO community has been through worth it. "

#### **JANET UNDERHILL, BYSO CONDUCTOR**

Janet Underhill is the conductor of BYSO's Preparatory Winds (PW) ensemble, an ensemble of winds, brass and percussion where students work on orchestral-style music in preparation for BYSO's full symphony orchestras. She also works closely with students in the Intensive Community Program (ICP) as the Assistant Director of Winds. Janet has been an active bassoon player and teacher in the Boston community for over 30 years.



# BUILDING LIFELONG CONNECTIONS

The BYSO family reaches beyond the classroom, the orchestral stage, and graduation. Based on a shared experience of seeking excellence in classical music, students forge lifelong connections. BYSO students are presented with a unique opportunity to grow up alongside a supportive group of teachers and peers who uplift each other throughout the ups and downs of these past few years. Here at BYSO, creating music is a familial experience.

"When they mentioned BYSO, and I told them that I was a proud alum, the entire family and I gathered together just as if we were all 'family' and I told them about my wonderful experience playing trombone with GBYSO in 1972! It was one of those moments in time that made my life so meaningful, to realize that I may have had a positive effect on these students and that it may give them an incentive to keep practicing and be enriched by the BYSO experience."

"Bonding with new (and old) friends at BYSO camp was such a wonderful experience and I am so glad that I have been able to perform with the orchestra in person, no matter the scheduling difficulties we went through with COVID precautions."

- SARAH BO '22

"BYSO was such a gift to me as an evolving musician and young person. I learned to listen and made incredible, lasting friendships. I am so grateful to the work of the BYSO family!"

- CHARLOTTE MALIN '10



#### BYSO'S 2022 SENIORS





#### **AREAS OF FOCUS** include:

Biology, Computer Science, Economics, Engineering, Law, Music Performance, Philosophy, Psychology

#### ATTENDING SCHOOLS

such as: Harvard University, Yale University,
Massachusetts Institute of Technology,
Brown University, The Juilliard School,
New York University, Boston
Conservatory at Berklee

## RECOGNIZING SUCCESS

BYSO provides a lifelong support system that not only sets alumni up for success, but inspires them to create positive change in their own communities. Alumni carry BYSO's unique sense of perseverance, collaboration and self-assurance into their work post-graduation, both in fields related to and distinct from classical music.

SÉBASTIEN RIDORE '15 started his BYSO journey in the Intensive Community Program (ICP) at the age of seven, ultimately performing with BYS for two years before graduation. Following his experience, it has been important for Sébastien to create a welcoming environment for young musicians from underrepresented communities, reflecting that "ICP was ahead of the curve in recognizing the importance of accessibility." In addition to currently working as the Vivaldi Ensemble Director at the Boston Music Project, where he fosters social-emotional and musical success for children through music education, Sébastien now teaches ICP students with direct insight into the needs, standards, and intensity of the program.

ASHLEY GONG '21 began sharing the gift of music while still in high school by volunteering with Continuo, a nonprofit music organization bringing classical music to nontraditional spaces through performances and lessons. Now serving as President for Continuo, attending Harvard University and playing with the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra, she is pleased to continue enjoying music, expressing that she is not only a better musician, but a better person, harder worker, and better leader thanks to her time with BYSO.

DR. KAREN LASSER '86 is a Professor of Medicine and Public Health at the Boston University Schools of Medicine and Public Health, where her recent research focuses on negating disparities in healthcare for underserved populations. Dr. Lasser remarks that BYSO's challenging repertoire helped prepare her to persevere through the long hours and hard work in the medicine field.

READ MORE ABOUT OUR IMPRESSIVE ALUMNI
BY VISITING BYSOWEB.ORG/ALUMNI



## A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This year, we all experienced the joy of returning to watch live performance and seeing our BYSO students play together once again. As COVID-19 continues to be unpredictable, BYSO has seen an increase in costs associated with providing a safe environment for our community. BYSO was fortunate to receive generous government funds to cover the majority of these losses.

The direct costs of COVID-19 for the 2021-2022 season totaled over \$113,000, including:

- Additional rehearsal and performance spaces
- Direct COVID-19 costs for tests, masks, PPE, etc.
- Rescheduling the BYSO's Opera performance of La Traviata



Throughout this, I am proud to report that this year, we had the largest number of individual donors in our history and we also had our largest amount raised through donations with a 24% increase from 2020. In addition, BYSO also gave \$120,540 in financial aid to assist families with the costs of our exceptional music education. These numbers represent a commitment from our community to help provide transformational musical experiences for all children. As we continue to navigate COVID-19, the impact of your support is crucial now more than ever. I am thankful to all who supported us this year.

Thank you for being with us on this journey.

Carrie Spendel

Catherine Weiskel Executive Director

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BYSO is incredibly grateful to the following community members for their gifts between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022.

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