



**BOSTON YOUTH
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRAS**

2023

Impact Report



Our Mission

We are a home for young musicians to flourish through exceptional orchestras, ensembles, and classical music experiences in Boston and beyond.

BYSO's mission is to encourage musical excellence in a professional and supportive environment by providing the highest quality orchestra training and performance opportunities to qualified musicians, grades K-12, and making its programs accessible to underserved communities through financial assistance and outreach.

Our programmatic scope includes three full symphonic orchestras, two young string training orchestras, six chamber orchestras, a preparatory wind ensemble, a chamber music program, and a nationally-recognized training program that provides rigorous instruction to students from underrepresented communities.

Together, we are makers of music, defenders of curiosity, and champions of courage. Through the brilliance of classical music and the gift of human connection, we celebrate the individual—both in standing out and finding one's place in the composition of our world.

*opportunity
courage
curiosity*



A Year Like No Other

When I think about BYSO's most momentous occasions this past season, I immediately think about our production of Berlioz's opera, *Damnation of Faust* performed by our most advanced orchestra, the Boston Youth Symphony (BYSO). What our students had to achieve in order to play this work at the level that they did, is not to be underestimated. The level of complexity and maturity an opera requires is unusual to expect in teenagers. This is particularly true for *Damnation of Faust*, an extremely unusual opera full of orchestral virtuosity, musical oddities and unusual instrumental writing. But the reason we CAN expect it is because they have been prepared in a way that very few other youth orchestras can. I say this not to imply that the top orchestra deserves all of the accolades for BYSO's incredible season. Here is what I mean...



There is no single orchestra or ensemble at BYSO that is not achieving great things.

It takes all of the hard work of our Petit Ensemble and our Preparatory Winds and our many other orchestras and ensembles to achieve something as profound as an opera at this level. Most of the students in our top orchestras have been working with BYSO's incredible conductors and coaches since they were beginners.

This production, and all of our operas, are not the work of several months of rehearsals, it is the work of MANY years of preparation. This is what makes BYSO so special...we are able to begin cultivating young musicians from the moment they walk through our doors.

And now, we have our very own doors to open. As with any production at BYSO, our work to create the BYSO Youth Center for Music has taken years—perhaps decades. What BYSO will become in our new home is full of possibilities. For our younger students, it will provide a true “home” for them to build their skills and their passion.

We have much to be proud of at BYSO this season. And we have much to look forward to!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Federico Cortese". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Federico Cortese
Music Director

Amplifying Our Accomplishments

This year was significant not only for your young musicians, but for our families and community. We celebrated many moments of accomplishment – from hearing our youngest musicians play their first notes to watching our beloved alumni celebrate achievement and triumph. On this shared journey, whether the moments are big or small, the mark we leave is everlasting.



In January, our beginning students, ages 4-7, attended their first BYSO rehearsal as part of the Intensive Community Program. As we watch them play their first notes at BYSO, they begin a journey filled with support, growth, and transformation.



In February, Bijon Watson '86 won his first Grammy for Best Large Jazz Ensemble Album at the 65th Annual Grammy Awards. Back in 2019, Bijon shared with us that “winning a Grammy would be really nice. Although it’s not the only form of validation in this field, it’s a dream to hope that your body of work would be appreciated on that level.”



Throughout the spring, concerto competition winner Ella J. Kim (violin) performed with the Boston Youth Symphony (BYS), wowing audiences as she performed without a conductor, cuing the full orchestra with just the movement of her violin. Ella states, “Putting on Saint Saëns’ ‘Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso’ at Symphony Hall was undoubtedly a tremendous achievement, but my favorite part was experiencing the process — laughing over tempo changes, sharing new stylistic approaches, working through challenges, and growing closer to my peers after every rehearsal... For me, music holds power in its ability to connect and uplift others. BYSO represents this so deeply.”



In May, our Petit Ensemble, conducted by Marta Žurad, took the stage at the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) Gala alongside James Taylor and Yo-Yo Ma for an incredible evening celebrating Boston's impressive music community. Our partnership, "BYSO/BSO: Partnering for the Future" offers joint performance opportunities for young musicians and audiences, while exploring innovative ways to foster the future of classical music.



This year, three BYSO students attended the prestigious National Youth Orchestras (NYO) in New York City, eight attended the Youth Orchestra Los Angeles (YOLA), and many attended Boston University Tanglewood Institute (BUTI). We are proud to have so many dedicated musicians representing BYSO's musical excellence nationwide this summer!

*confidence
belonging
excellence*



Everlasting Memories

“The first time I played a concert in Symphony Hall, I realized how much progress I had made as a musician and as a person. I had spent years attending concerts there, watching my sister perform on its grand stage. I never thought about it much, but the idea of playing in an orchestra with others who are the same age but coming from different backgrounds is incredible and unique. You get to soak in the gift of being with others who come as individuals and become a part of a caring and supportive community, constantly striving to make beautiful music and create something special together.

As I sat on stage at Symphony Hall for the very first time, six years after my first lessons in ICP, I was of course blown away by how magnificent the hall is, but I also couldn't feel any prouder of myself and my friends for getting to that point—for dedicating ourselves to working hard, growing together, and pushing each other to play and be our best.

My seven years in BYSO culminated with our final ICP graduation recital. At this concert, we get to celebrate our progress and accomplishments with joy. It was a special moment—a realization that my time in BYSO's orchestras was over and the friends I had grown up with will shortly head to college. For years, we all came together to make music, learned from the same teachers and conductors, and were all on the same journey. Now, as BYSO alumni, we carry our memories, life-long friendships, and everlasting lessons with us as we begin our next chapter.

Because of BYSO, I know a lot more not just about music, but about myself. I get to use what I learned and experienced and take that with me on my next journey and throughout the rest of my life. There is a lasting sense of pride and accomplishment I get from playing my instrument and it all started with BYSO.”

Andixson St. Louis '23



Returning Home

During his final years of BYSO's Intensive Community Program (ICP), Sébastien Ridore '15 knew he wanted to be a professional musician. Playing viola was challenging, exciting, and invigorating all at the same time. Joan Ellersick '76 was enamored with viola from an early age. Playing in BYSO (then GBYSO) inspired her to see music as more than a hobby, but a professional career. Joan carried this goal throughout high school and college, eventually moving to Michigan to teach and play professionally. Upon returning to Boston, her first call was to BYSO, hopeful to pay it forward to the organization that sparked her passion for music. Before she knew it, she was back in the place where it all started.

Soon after, Joan became Sébastien's ICP teacher. Often carpooling together after lessons, Joan became a mentor and friend, too. She proved it was possible to turn a passion for music into a full-time job.

Now, as an ICP teacher himself, Sébastien and Joan often exchange advice on teaching different age groups and how to teach in ways that resonate with their students. They have witnessed firsthand how formative it is for students to navigate their musicianship together, whether persevering through long rehearsals or reveling in the standing ovation after a momentous performance.

Joan and Sébastien exemplify a defining facet of BYSO: the creation of lifelong bonds. As BYSO opens its doors at the Youth Center for Music, we will also open our doors to lasting connections that inspire and support one another. In our new home, generations of aspiring musicians will come together not just to create music, but continue to forge lasting connections.





An Iconic Next Chapter for BYSO

"The BYSO Youth Center for Music is completely unique. There is nothing like it in Boston. It's in the center of Boston, it celebrates children, and embraces music in a way that no other organization does... BYSO is personally for me one of the most important things I think I will do in my life. The opportunity we have here is momentous. To be able to create a physical location for our musicians and the students of Boston is an amazing opportunity."

Margaret Chen
Chair, BYSO Board of Directors

On March 4th, 2023, BYSO publicly announced the creation of the BYSO Youth Center for Music at 235 Huntington Avenue. This next chapter is the realization of a long-time vision to create a home right in the heart of Boston for all members of our community to come together and share in the power and joy of music education.

For over 65 years, we have provided a path for all children to pursue excellence in both musicianship and personhood. With our new home, we build on this legacy and create a space that is inspired by our history, energized by our youth, and welcoming to all children of the next generation.

As we open our doors to more families and communities, we deepen our sense of togetherness and belonging. Together, we begin our journey filled with endless possibilities and momentous experiences.

Learn more about the BYSO Youth Center for Music by visiting [BYSOweb.org/Home](https://www.bysoweb.org/Home)

Energizing Our Communities

Everyone who interacts with BYSO, be it through attending a concert or making a gift, is energized and transformed by the music of our children.

FRIENDS

Our thousands of alumni graduate to diverse careers, taking with them the courage and confidence they found at BYSO.

At the start of every season, students forge life-long friendships at camp, which energizes a new year of musical excellence alongside inspiring peers.

ALUMNI



STUDENTS



Since 1958,
BYSO
has energized
communities
through the power of
exceptional music.

ARTISTS

Every child feels supported by BYSO's world-class artistic staff as they push the limits of musicianship among one of BYSO's six orchestras and ensembles.



BOSTON

Music is embedded in the history of our city. Here, we create a vibrant space with youthful energy, filled with the music of our children.



FAMILIES

Our family community is the life force of our mission. From Sunday rehearsals, concerts, and many hours of practicing—they make sure it all happens.

Budget

Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2023 (unaudited)

REVENUES

	FY23
Tuition and Fees	\$1,889,710
Ticket Sales and Advertising	\$146,203
Merchandise Sales and Other Earned Revenue	\$13,669
Endowment Income and Interest	\$16,841
Foundation Support	\$615,798
Government Support	\$198,200
Corporate Support and Sponsorships	\$113,600
Individual Support	\$431,759
Special Event	\$340,939
Donated Goods and Services	\$236,843
TOTAL	\$4,003,562

EXPENSES

Orchestra Operations and Rehearsals	\$1,050,126
Concert Production	\$271,580
Intensive Community Program (direct cost only)	\$543,068
Camp	\$313,276
Space Rental	\$246,440
Financial Aid	\$112,963
Administrative Salaries and Benefits	\$882,112
Other Administrative	\$276,507
Marketing	\$63,362
Fundraising (includes special event costs)	\$169,403
TOTAL	\$3,928,837
Net	\$74,725
Additional Covid Relief Funding	\$548,489

Budget Notes

1. In FY23, BYSO purchased 235 Huntington Avenue to create the BYSO Youth Center for Music. All costs and income associated with that project are not included in this operating budget
2. In preparation for ownership of our new building, BYSO strategically increased operating reserves in FY22 and FY23 (as seen here) to cover short-term operating deficits associated with the new BYSO Youth Center for Music
3. BYSO was the recipient of Employee Retention Grants received as part of COVID Relief Funding

*Momentum
togetherness
expression*



Thank You



The 2022–2023 season was one of the most momentous and rewarding years since I became a part of BYSO in 1996. During our 65th year we celebrated our growth from the first orchestral season in 1958 with 80 students to serving over 600 incredibly passionate and committed students today. We continue to see our young musicians perform and excel well beyond their expectations and we are equally proud to watch our alumni lead with courage, confidence, and commitment in their own communities, both near and far. I am deeply grateful for your support which makes this journey possible and for the privilege of being part of this community we have built together.

As we begin our next chapter at the BYSO Youth Center for Music and expand the legacy of BYSO for generations to come, the impact of your commitment to our young musicians is now more important than ever. This is an immensely proud moment for all of us at BYSO. We know this natural next step will change the course of BYSO forever and we are prepared both artistically and financially to ensure BYSO's transition to our new home is successful and secure.

I want to thank you for your support during this extraordinary year, and for being a steadfast part of our ever-growing BYSO family. I look forward to welcoming you into our new home in the near future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine Weiskel". The script is fluid and cursive.

Catherine Weiskel
President and CEO

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