



Handbook 2026-27

*The Western Connecticut Youth Orchestra is a program of the
Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra.*

CONTACT INFORMATION

Website: wctyo.org

Email: wcyo@wctyo.org

Telephone: 203.894.8786

Mailing & Office Address:

Western Connecticut Youth Orchestra
77 Danbury Road, Ridgefield, CT 06877

(WCYO shares an office with the Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra)

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Western Connecticut Youth Orchestra (WCYO) is to educate and inspire young musicians through the study and performance of classical and contemporary musical works, participation in enrichment activities, and engagement with the community.

Our program provides an opportunity to develop artistry and technique, as well as profound understanding and appreciation of instrumental music. Our members are challenged not only to perform at the highest level, but also to build character, creativity, and self-esteem, with music as their guide.

PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL MUSIC PROGRAMS & PRIVATE STUDY

It is the policy of the WCYO that members participate in their school music program and pursue private study of their instrument.

ELIGIBILITY, AUDITIONS & SEATING

Membership in the WCYO organization is by audition. The WCYO is a full symphonic orchestra made up of string, woodwind, brass and percussion musicians up to 18 years of age. The ensemble performs professional orchestral repertoire, from staples of the classical genre to music of the 21st century. Musicians frequently work with professional guest musicians in a sectional and workshop formats, have the opportunity to premier original compositions, participate in an annual concerto competition and take part in community engagement activities.

Students will be assigned to sections and seats by the Music Director. Seating decisions are based on an assessment of musical ability, leadership skills and the arrangement best suited to achieve optimal musical results for the ensemble.

COMMITMENT & CONDUCT

Membership in the WCYO organization is an honor and a privilege. Musicians chosen by audition to play in the WCYO are expected to make participation a priority. Instrumentation and balance within the ensemble is established at the time of auditions and must be maintained through regular attendance by all musicians.

Musicians must at all times conduct themselves respectfully toward their leaders, their fellow musicians, their instruments and the rehearsal and concert venues. Musicians who fail to conduct themselves appropriately may be dismissed from the WCYO. (See Code of Conduct Form sent via DocuSign.)

ATTENDANCE

If the WCYO is to achieve the highest possible level of performance, preparation of the music and attendance at all rehearsals and concerts during the season is crucial for all musicians. Absences seriously hinder the ensemble's musical development during a season. Tardiness is also extremely disruptive to the rehearsal process. Therefore, please plan to attend rehearsal each week and on time.

Should a musician need to miss a rehearsal, the following attendance policy applies:

Musicians will be allowed up to two (2) absences, regardless of reason, per concert cycle, without penalty. Additional absences will result in the musician having to play for the conductor to ensure the appropriate progress on the music for that concert cycle. Any musician with three (3) absences during a concert cycle may be excused from the upcoming concert. Three (3) tardy arrivals constitute an absence.

Absences should be brought to the attention of the Executive Director via email at wcyo@wctyo.org as soon as the musician is aware of the need for the absence. The Executive Director will notify the conductor.

REHEARSALS

Musicians should arrive at the rehearsal venue 15 minutes prior to the designated start time in order to unpack and be ready to begin rehearsal on time. Musicians should ensure that their instrument is in good working order and that they have adequate accessories (strings, reeds, swabs, etc.). Musicians should bring their music and a sharpened pencil to each rehearsal. On occasion, musicians may be asked to bring a music stand to rehearsal. At the end of each rehearsal, musicians are expected to help straighten the rehearsal space.

At the discretion of the conductor, there will be a brief break taken during the course of a rehearsal. However, at no time is food allowed on the stage or in the rehearsal rooms. Musicians are welcome to bring water bottles onto the stage or into the rehearsal rooms, but no other beverages are permitted.

Students are responsible for their instruments and music as well as any other personal items brought to rehearsals. The WCYO does not maintain a lost-and-found.

A detailed rehearsal schedule, including the location of each week's rehearsal, is posted on the WCYO website at wctyo.org under the Members tab. Generally, rehearsals take place on Thursday evenings from 6:00-8:45 PM, with exceptions made for religious and school holidays and rehearsal venue conflicts.

Musicians will be notified via email blast of any changes in the rehearsal schedule.

MUSIC

Music is posted on the WCYO website under the Members tab. Music remains posted throughout each concert cycle. Musicians are responsible for downloading and printing their own music. If musicians lose their music or need additional copies, they are expected to print replacement music. All musicians should bring their music to rehearsal each week. The password for the music page is **wcyo** (all lower case).

CONCERT ATTIRE (Concert Black)

Girls: Black dress OR black skirt and black blouse OR black blouse and black dress pants with black dress shoes. NO slits in skirts or pants, spaghetti straps, strapless tops, exposed midriffs, shiny hair ornaments, excessive makeup or perfume. Dresses or skirts MUST fall below the knee when sitting.

Boys: Black long-sleeved dress shirt and black dress pants. Black socks and black dress shoes. Black belt (if worn). NO black sneakers.

RETREATS/TRIPS/SPECIAL PERFORMANCES

Retreats, trips and special performances are arranged at the discretion of the WCYO Music Director, the Executive Director, the Board of Directors, and with the support of WCYO parents.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

The WCYO organization depends upon the support of its parent community. There are opportunities for parents to assist the WCYO organization, including, but are not limited to, assistance at concerts and special events, publicity and fundraising,

TUITION & FEES

Application Fee:

There is a non-refundable fee of \$40 due upon submission of an application for an audition.

Annual Tuition: \$900

Tuition is due upon acceptance into the WCYO and no later than July 30 for June auditions and within 15 days of acceptance at other times during the year. Tuition is non-refundable after September 30. Note: Additional fees may be required in the case of events such as a retreat, trips or a special performance.

Financial Assistance:

An application for need-based financial assistance is available on the website under the **Audition to Join Us!** tab on the website or click [HERE](#). Financial assistance applications are due by July 30 for June acceptances or within 15 days of acceptance at other times during the year.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Western Connecticut Youth Orchestra (WCYO) is a program of the Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra, Inc. which is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, FEIN #06-6098657, and therefore donations given and designated to support the WCYO are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

CHARLES IVES MUSIC FESTIVAL

affiliated educational & performance program

The mission of the Charles Ives Music Festival (CIMF) is to honor the legacy of Charles Ives by bringing American music to the Fairfield County area. CIMF concerts regularly feature dynamic and unique artists performing the works of Charles Ives, the music of 20th and 21st-century American composers, and music that transcends the traditional boundaries of classical music to incorporate other styles of music. **CIMF also provides interactive educational events, centered around the exploration of chamber music.**

The **CIMF Weekend Workshop** is a chamber music program held in the winter for advanced WCYO musicians. For more information, click [HERE](#).

The **CIMF summer programs (Chamber Music Intensive and Chamber & Orchestra Performance Program)** offer aspiring musicians the opportunity to perform side-by-side with world class Artist-Faculty in chamber music groups and in the CIMF Orchestra. CIMF Artist-Faculty hold positions in major American Orchestras, lead renowned chamber ensembles, and perform on Broadway. For more information, click [HERE](#).

In addition to the educational programs, CIMF presents a professional series of artist concerts performed by CIMF Artist-Faculty and guest musicians. Concerts are held in the summer during the two-week festival and periodically during the school year. Concerts are held at a variety of venues and are open to the public. WCYO musicians are admitted free of charge to all CIMF concerts. For more information, click [HERE](#).