



BUFFALO  
PHILHARMONIC  
ORCHESTRA

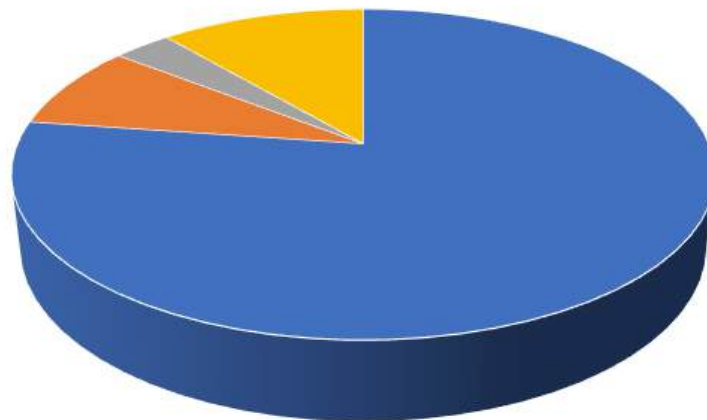
# 2025-26 Education & Community Final Report

Concerts for  
Youth

Schools &  
Community

Increasing  
Access

Attendance Youth and Family (41,060)



■ Youth Concerts (31,715) ■ Educational Outreach (3,406) ■ Youth Development (1,318) ■ Family Series (4,621)

# Music for Youth

## School Concerts

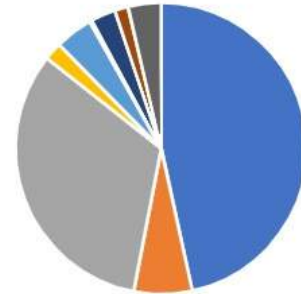
Bringing world-class orchestral programming to students across Western New York through our far-reaching Youth Concert Series.

**31,715 attendees**

29 concerts

**180 schools**

across all 8 WNY counties



- Buffalo Public Schools (14,770)
- Erie County (10,341)
- Chautauqua/Cattaraugus/Allegany (1,327)
- Charter Schools (867)
- Other: homeschool, disability services, out of state (1,165)
- Catholic Schools (2,050)
- Niagara/Orleans County (637)
- Genesee/Wyoming Counties (86)
- WNY Private Schools (472)



This season, the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra's Music for Youth concert series achieved remarkable reach across Western New York, **surpassing our pre-pandemic average attendance** and welcoming **an all-time high number of students from Erie County public schools**. Through this initiative, we successfully engaged students from **all eight counties of the region**, ensuring that high-quality, live orchestral programming is accessible to learners throughout the community.

The 2025-2026 concert theme, **Building Harmony**, was led by Grant O'Brien, JoAnn Falletta Conducting Fellow. The program used the metaphor of an orchestra to teach essential life and citizenship skills, such as responsibility, respect, and preparation. The audience responded with great enthusiasm to the interactive elements—ranging from rhythmic clapping and snapping exercises to singing together—which allowed them to engage directly with the music and experience the joy of teamwork firsthand. Our **Friday Morning coffee concerts also welcomed 3,681 students**, especially popular with middle and high school music programs.

# School District Partnerships

During the 2025–26 season, the BPO expanded partnerships with school districts to increase access to high-quality music programming for youth and community members.

## Music for Youth Concerts

### Buffalo Public Schools

Our longstanding partnership with the Buffalo Public Schools included **14 dedicated concerts serving over 14,200 BPS students at Kleinhans** throughout the season. This year we welcomed BPS Kindergarteners for the first time, resulting in all BPS students in grades K–6 being served at annual youth concerts.

The annual West Side Connection featuring Sphinx Competition winner, **18-year-old violinist Jacqueline Rodenbeck** was enjoyed by nearly 600 Buffalo high schoolers, in addition to over 300 Western New York students from other schools.



### Catholic Schools

Our longtime partnership with the Catholic School system unites 1st–4th graders at Kleinhans for an annual youth concert experience. This year brought **1,133 students and teachers from 15 area Catholic schools** for the theme of “Building Harmony,” tackling the concepts of respect, personal responsibility, cooperation, and community, all through the orchestra.

### Williamsville Central School District

Our designated youth concert for the Williamsville Central School District welcomes students in Grades 1–4 from all six district elementary schools to Kleinhans each year. This year’s concert ushered in **1,534 students** and teachers. We also welcomed over **800 Williamsville 6<sup>th</sup> graders** from all four district middle schools at one of our February youth concerts.

### Amherst Link Up

Carnegie Hall’s Link Up program is one of the country’s most innovative music education programs, culminating in an interactive youth concert in which students perform with the orchestra from their seats. Our biennial collaboration with the Amherst Central School District welcomes students in Grades 3–5 and their families to Kleinhans to sing and play recorder along with the orchestra. This season, we served **675 students** and nearly 500 supporting audience members for “The Orchestra Moves.”

### Niagara Falls City School District

The orchestra returned to Niagara Falls for the first time since 2003 with a **free performance at Niagara Falls High School Performing Arts Center**. Created as a family-friendly experience, *Rhythm of the Falls* highlighted the excitement and accessibility of live orchestral music in our community. This event was made possible with support from the Grigg Lewis Foundation, Inc.



# Bridging the Classroom with the Concert Hall



## Teaching Artists

BPO musician teaching artists made 45 visits to 14 different schools and community centers, serving a total of **2,919 people**. Visits included instrumental workshops and coachings, classroom programs and professional development clinics for music educators.

Some highlights:

- Six **professional development workshops** for educators, which included presentations at the WNY Music Educators Conference and workshops for music educators in the Clarence and Williamsville school districts.
- **Residencies with Conductor Grant O'Brien** in the Williamsville district and Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts.
- **School-wide assemblies** for the Alden, Cheektowaga-Sloan, West Seneca, and Williamsville districts, in addition to a charter school and homeschool community.

## Community Spotlight

**21 school and community groups** participated in these pre-concert performances, showcasing a total of **487 performers**. In addition, over 810 of their friends and family members purchased discount BPO tickets. All performance groups get a free ticket to the BPO concert that follows their performance.

Over the course of the season, performers were also able to meet featured guest artists and BPO musicians, creating memorable moments for the young performers. For instance, 50 performers from the Springville High School Orchestra had the opportunity to meet with violin guest artist Amaryn Olmeda.

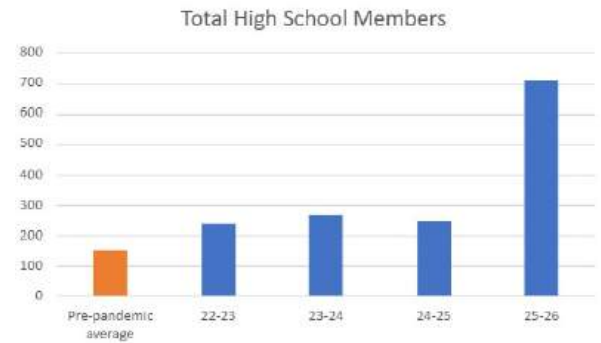
# Youth Development

## Empowering the Next Generation

BPO musicians and guest artists are mentoring young musicians through a variety of programs.

### Symphony Hall Pass

With a strong focus on recruitment over the last few years, this program serving high school musicians has really grown. This year had a record **711 members** from 40 different schools, with 460 members being from REACH Academy Charter School! Participating students get a ticket to most BPO concerts, as well as invitations to special guest artist meet-and-greets and other backstage opportunities. **Members used over 720 tickets for 43 concerts throughout the season**, building a strong bond with their orchestra.



### Buffalo String Works

Through a partnership with Buffalo String Works (BSW), four BPO musicians provided **weekly string lessons** throughout the year to the Advanced Ensemble students at BSW's West Side location – **a total of 105 lessons!**

The BPO also brought **Sphinx Artist Jacqueline Rodenbeck** to work with the students and hosted BSW families at a BPO concert, donating 63 tickets.

### Side by Side Mentoring

As part of the BPO's side by side experience with students from the **Greater Buffalo Youth Orchestra (GBYO)** and the **Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts (BAVPA)**, the student musicians got time with BPO coaches in preparation for the concert. Our work with BAVPA is especially robust, involving school visits many months in advance of the concert. Rehearsals and coachings were given by Grant O'Brien and seven BPO musicians beginning in February and progressing up until the concert in early May.

New this year, was a side by side performance with the **SUNY Fredonia Orchestra** conducted by JoAnn Falletta. Many Fredonia alumni attended a pre-concert reception and about 400 supporters came to cheer the students on.



### Masterclasses

BPO guest artists were once again featured in the free BPO Masterclass series, **servicing 13 young performers and over 100 attendees**. Violinist Aubree Oliverson, guitarist Pablo Sáinz Villegas, and cellist Sterling Elliott all took time to share their insights with our local students in front of an audience. The masterclasses are free and open to the public.

# Increasing Access

Our goal is to remove barriers through radical affordability, inclusive programming and digital resources to ensure our whole community can enjoy the BPO.

## For families

Aspects of our **radical accessibility initiative** for the BPO family series include a flat \$8 ticket price, free parking, and added supports for families with children that have disabilities. The results have been truly striking, proving that these efforts help the BPO reach our full community, including those from underrepresented areas.

While there has been a big jump in attendance overall (over 4,600 attendees came this year), the accessibility pricing has also **increased access, leading to greater representation**. Buyers from City of Buffalo Zip codes that are historically underrepresented in BPO sales, and from low income Zip codes as indicated by US Census data climbed from 668 in the 18-19 season to 1,407 in the 25-26 season.

## For people with disabilities

**837 people in the disability community** were served through specially designed interactive concerts, including one at St. Mary's School for the Deaf, featuring their Sing and Sign Chorus, and two Exceptional Holiday concerts at Kleinhans. These performances are located in accessible spaces and welcome attendees to react to the music any way they feel comfortable.



## Music for Youth Education Hub

*Digital Resources for All*

**145 videos**  
8,029 new views

Used by **340 teachers**  
from **249 schools**

**#PlayOnWNY & #SingOnWNY**  
7,350 new views

Users from other states including PA, MA, WV, TX, CA, MO, GA, FL, MD, AZ, NJ, UT and WY.

A total of over **59,000 views** since the project's inception in 2020.

# THANK YOU to our sponsors

This work would not be possible without the support of our sponsors and supporters.



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