

Hoff-Barthelson Music School

Spring 2021 Festival Orchestra Restoration “FAQs”

1) Why Consider Restoring Orchestral Instruction This Spring, When There’s Still So Much Uncertainty about the Course of the Pandemic?

Most public experts predict that COVID-19 vaccinations won’t be broadly available to healthy adults and children until this summer; others estimate that it may take a full year to vaccinate enough of the US population for life – and K-12 education – to return to normal.

If accurate, these estimates could well mean that students will miss between *15 and 18 months* of musical training at a critical period in their development. Gaps of even a semester can significantly disadvantage students; longer gaps can be extraordinarily difficult for students to overcome.

Months matter in the realms of music education as well as child and youth development.

The harms children and youth are experiencing are real and they impel us to respond.

While no one can yet credibly predict specific timelines, NYS’s [micro-cluster framework](#) defines sets of conditions that can inform decisions about whether to run in-person group instructional programs. Further, guidance from the [CDC](#), the [Performing Arts Aerosol Study](#), and the NYS Department of Health’s [Micro-Cluster Strategy](#), [Vaccination Program](#), and [Winter Plan](#), describes the safety measures that must be in place to operate in-person, indoor group instructional programming safely.

Drawing on these resources enables us to design programs we’re confident can be conducted safely with precautions described below.

Convening large student ensembles takes many weeks of planning even under the best of circumstances. We’re therefore seeking your input now so that, if we have the support needed to restore these ensembles later this spring, we’ll have enough lead time to do so successfully.

2) What space will be used? What safety precautions will be in place?

All activities will be conducted in our JBB Auditorium, which is served by an air handling system with MERV-13 filtration that completes 17 air changes per hour and provides a 50/50 mix of filtered and fresh air at all times. The air in our auditorium is fully filtered every four minutes and a full fresh air exchange occurs every eight minutes or less.

All music stands, chairs, tables and high-touch surfaces will be sanitized before and after each rehearsal.

All participants will be required to wear facemasks at all times. (This requirement prevents us from accommodating wind and brass students in Festival Orchestra until the pandemic has subsided.)

While the auditorium can accommodate more than 150 people under normal conditions, student participation will be capped at 16, with participants seated at least six feet apart, with just one student per stand, and no students sharing music or materials.*

To reduce the risk posed by COVID-19 aerosols, rehearsals will be limited to a maximum of 60 minutes, with rooms not used for a minimum of 30 minutes prior to the beginning of each rehearsal to ensure at least three full air exchanges are completed in the auditorium prior to students’ arrival.*

Health assessment forms will be completed by all participants prior to entering the rehearsal space.

No one with symptoms, possible exposure, etc., or with a member of their household in quarantine or isolation will be allowed to participate in person until cleared by health professionals.

In the event an individual—student, staff, faculty member or family member—tests positive and is determined to have visited the facility during the period in which they may have been infectious, the administration will immediately consult with the Westchester County Department of Health to initiate contact tracing, notify the HBMS community, and take other protective measures as recommended by the WCDOH.

Hoff-Barthelsson’s safety guidelines were most recently updated on December 9; to learn more, [click here](#).

*Please see for detailed information on program design.

3) What must external conditions be in order for these programs to run?

With the above-described safety measures in place, programs will operate as scheduled. Because of the uncertainties regarding timeframes associated with NYS’s five-phase [Vaccination Program](#), the programs are designed to be able to be run as soon as NYS has entered Phase Two.

Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Healthcare workers (clinical and non-clinical) in patient care settings<ul style="list-style-type: none">ICU, ED, EMS top priorityLong-term care facility (LTCF) workers who regularly interact with residentsMost at-risk long-term care facility patients
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">First responders (fire, police, national guard)Teachers/school staff (in-person instruction), childcare providersPublic Health workersOther essential frontline workers that regularly interact with public (pharmacists, grocery store workers, transit employees, etc.) or maintain critical infrastructureOther long-term care facility patients and those living in other congregate settingsIndividuals in general population deemed particularly high risk due to comorbidities and health conditions
Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Individuals over 65Individuals under 65 with high-risk comorbidities and health conditions
Phase 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">All other essential workers
Phase 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Healthy adults and children

The proposed program plans are designed so that rehearsals can be conducted safely even if Scarsdale and contiguous communities are Yellow Zones, defined by NYS’s [micro-cluster framework](#) as having a 3 percent positivity rate (7-day average) over the past 10 days and is in the top 10 percent in the state for hospital admissions per capita over the past week and is experiencing week-over-week growth in daily admissions. However, this decision may be modified based on parent feedback.

In the event our service area is designated an **Orange** or **Red Zone**, in which schools are required to shift all instruction online, at the time the program is scheduled to be launched, in-person group instructional programs will be canceled in their entirety, and tuition refunded. Should such a designation occur *after* the program has begun, further in-person rehearsals could be converted into online sectional rehearsals, or cancelled, with tuition pro-rated accordingly.

4) What are key design changes being proposed for the Festival Orchestra to enable it to operate safely this spring?

In both scenarios outlined below, we will convene only string players, as they are able to wear masks while playing, and as significant repertoire appropriate for advanced string orchestras is available for these students to learn and perform.

Additionally, the Festival Orchestra strings will be split into two cohorts of a maximum of 16 players each. Cohorts will be equally divided and both will study and perform the same repertoire.

Programs will be cancelled and tuition refunded if Scarsdale is designated an Orange or Red Zone as of February 26 (3 days prior to the first rehearsal).

Programs will shift to online sectionals or is cancelled (with tuition prorated) if Scarsdale is designated an Orange or Red Zone after instruction has begun.

Festival Orchestra Strings, option 1:

- 13 60-minute sessions on Tuesday evenings starting March 1 and ending June 1, 2021; Cohort A will rehearse from 6:45-7:45pm and Cohort B from 8:30-9:30pm
- Rehearsals in March will be either in-person (full cohort) or online (sectionals), depending upon pandemic conditions
- Sessions in April, May and June will all be in-person, with full cohorts
- Each cohort will participate in one session of sectionals (may be online) led by members of the New York Philharmonic
- Final sessions on June 1 will be live-streamed performances for family and friends

Festival Orchestra Strings, option 2:

- 10 60-minute sessions on Tuesday evenings starting April 6 and ending June 8, 2021; Cohort A will rehearse from 6:45-7:45pm and Cohort B from 8:30-9:30pm
- One session (TBA) will be online sectionals with members of the New York Philharmonic
- Final sessions on June 8 will be live-streamed performances for family and friends