

SPRING AUDITIONS

May 24, 30, 31 and June 6. For details, see page 3.

Side-by-Side with The Philadelphia Orchestra!



Austin Chanu leads the PS and Philadelphia Orchestra musicians in rehearsal for Beethoven's Symphony No. 5; February 28, 2026. (Photo credit: Jeff Fusco)

“Exciting!” was the word most often used by Sinfonia’s student musicians.

And according to Sinfonia’s Music Director, Mr. Linus, later that afternoon, the PS orchestra’s sound had actually changed...!

The moment in question was the morning of February 28, 2026; the place was the Kimmel Center; and the event was a side-

by-side rehearsal hosted by the incredible musicians of The Philadelphia Orchestra. The main focus of the rehearsal was Beethoven’s well-loved, dramatic *Symphony No. 5*, which PS was performing the next day.

Sinfonia’s string players were each sharing a stand with a Philadelphia Orchestra musician, and wind, brass, and percussion members were lined side-by-

side with their Philadelphia Orchestra counterparts.

The first and largest portion of the rehearsal, focused on Beethoven’s 5th, was led by Dr. Austin Chanu, who recently completed his tenure as the Assistant Conductor of The Philadelphia Orchestra.

Dr. Chandu led the orchestras through movement after movement of Beethoven’s 5th, stopping to refine and work through sections and phrases where he felt their playing needed some attention. And he thoughtfully gave time now and then for the student musicians to talk with and receive advice from their professional counterparts, and the phrases and sections improved!

After a brief break, Mr. Linus took the podium to lead the orchestras through *Brahms’ Tragic Overture*, again, with a few sections reworked, and then, after two and a half wonderful hours, the side-by-side rehearsal concluded with a huge thank you to The Philadelphia Orchestra musicians for an incredible, inspiring morning that members of Sinfonia’s advanced ensemble will surely remember for a long time to come.

A Joyous Beginning: PSS opens the Winter Concert Season!

With a special, spectacular soloist, PSS opened our winter concert season demonstrating remarkable polish. The ensemble’s first performance of the year, which for some musicians was their very first concert venture – ever – in an ensemble, was remarkably well-played under the baton of their conductor, Ms. Beth Dzwil.

With care and attention to style, they

performed arrangements of work by Florence Price, William Boyce, and the first movement of J.S. Bach’s *Concerto No. 1 in a minor* – which was highlighted by a truly special soloist, current PS musician Lucia Nasrallah.

Lucia was herself a student in PSS a mere three years ago, but her trajectory as a musician has been swift and accomplished.

Continued on page 3.



PSS violins in concert.

From the Podium Growth Through Music

Over the past three months, our mission at Philadelphia Sinfonia has been to nurture the growth of young musicians by training them at the highest artistic level. Our Sinfonia concerts reflected the journey of growth in many ways. Let's take a moment to talk about growth and why it is such an important part of the Sinfonia experience.

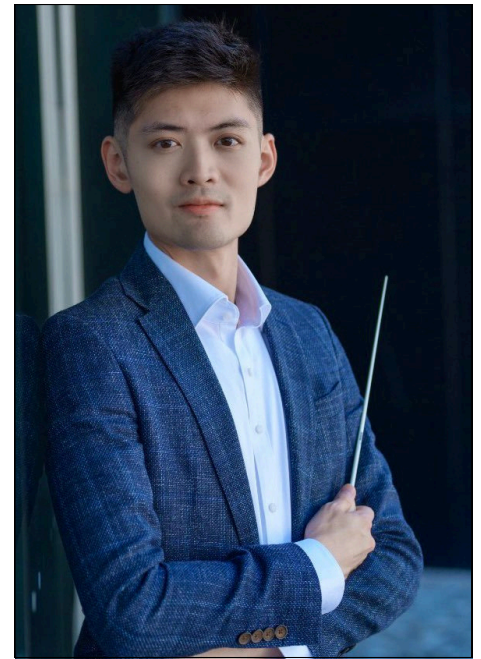
Artistic growth was at the center of this program. A particularly inspiring moment during this concert cycle was our PS side-by-side rehearsal with The Philadelphia Orchestra. Working alongside professional musicians was a transformative experience for young players. Being immersed in the "Philadelphia Orchestra sound" and experiencing the level of precision required at the highest professional level had an immediate impact on how our musicians approached the music. Experiencing professional rehearsal standards and the highest level of music-making represents an important step of growth for young musicians entering the profession. In regular rehearsals, I challenge our musicians to work toward a professional orchestral standard, encouraging them to approach their music with the same discipline, attention to detail, and artistic commitment expected at the highest level of performance by providing a safe pre-professional training environment.

Another important dimension of our students' development is **growth in artistic perspective**. This commitment to

broadening our students' musical understanding has been an ongoing focus throughout the season and across all ensembles. In our PS March concert, music by Ethel Smyth introduced the orchestra to the voice of an important composer whose work has often been overlooked, while a piece by Carlos Simon brought the language and energy of contemporary American music into our rehearsal room. Across our ensembles this season, musicians have also explored music beyond the standard canon: by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor in PSCO, Amy Beach in PSP, and works by Joe Hisaishi and Jennifer Higdon in PSS. Engaging with both historic and living composers is an essential part of providing our students with a well-rounded musical education.

At the same time, I observed tremendous **leadership growth** within the orchestras. This spirit of Sinfonia leadership is also reflected in our Conducting Apprenticeship Program, where student conductors take weekly conducting classes with me and have opportunities to lead rehearsals with Philadelphia Sinfonia. This season, our conducting apprentices led rehearsals during our holiday music sight-reading session as well as a PSCO reading session of *Serenade for Strings in C* by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Many of the apprentices also perform in PSCO, allowing them to experience both leadership and ensemble playing from multiple perspectives.

We **support our students' growth** by fostering a supportive learning environment. Without emphasizing intense competition, our goal at Philadelphia Sinfonia is to create a space where young



Linus Ip, Music Director & Conductor.

artists can grow steadily as musicians, build confidence, and develop artistry over time. By working closely with conductors, coaches, and peers, our musicians are encouraged to ask questions, take musical risks, and deepen understanding of the music in a collaborative and encouraging atmosphere. At Sinfonia, we believe music is meant to be shared. It is a language of connection and collaboration, not a tool for competition.

I look forward to continuing this journey of growth together in the months ahead, leading up to our PS season's final concert performing side by side with professional musicians of the Philly Pops.

Linus Ip
Music Director & Conductor

Our Conducting Apprentices Take the Baton!

Mr. Linus introduced a new initiative at the beginning of December. A signature piece of his broad approach to orchestral training, the Conducting Apprentice program is open to any interested PS student and runs in between rehearsals every Saturday from 2:00 to 2:30.

I visited an early Saturday, December 13, the second week of the program, and was intrigued watching the proceedings. Eleven students, primarily strings (violin, viola, and cello), but one oboe and one trombone player, eagerly dove into some sight reading (Leroy Anderson's *A Christmas Festival*), with one of their own at the podium, baton in hand, keeping the group together and in time to the score.

In all, four of the group volunteered for a chance to work at the podium this time, with various results. One student had quite a command of the role, while a couple of others needed a little guidance from Mr. Linus, who gently explained the gestures with the baton, helped the student keep the transitions in the score moving from one section to another, and provided overall encouragement. No-one was even slightly discouraged if this was a first try with a baton.

The musicians played with enthusiasm regardless of who was at the podium, clearly enjoyed each other and themselves, and the rapport between Mr. Linus and the students, while respectful, was easy and

comfortable.

Several values are at play in this new initiative. While a long-time tenet of Philadelphia Sinfonia is the development of student leadership, and conducting clearly strengthens that, conducting, says Mr. Linus, also teaches students to "communicate clearly, to think about the ensemble as a whole, and to make artistic decisions with confidence and responsibility." And a crew of PS musicians is ready and eager for that. It was really fun for me to watch, absorb, and learn....

Carol Brown
Editor

Call for Spring Auditions

While we also hold auditions in the fall, spring is our primary audition time. Some sections are filled by the end of spring auditions.

Going into its 30th season, the Philadelphia Sinfonia program includes several performance opportunities for each orchestra, varied and challenging repertoire, master classes and sectionals.

We have four orchestras:

Philadelphia Sinfonia (PS): advanced full symphonic orchestra for ages 14 -23
Rehearsals: Saturdays, 2:50 – 5:30 PM

Philadelphia Sinfonia Players (PSP): intermediate-advanced full symphonic orchestra for ages 11-18

Rehearsals: Saturdays, 9:50 AM - 12:00 noon

Philadelphia Sinfonia Chamber Orchestra (PSCO): advanced string orchestra
Open to any PS string player

Rehearsals: Saturdays, 12:20 – 2:00 PM

Philadelphia Sinfonia Strings (PSS): string ensemble to build orchestral skills for musicians age 10 – 16. More information below.

Rehearsals: Saturdays 9:20 to 11:00 AM

Auditions take place at the Howard Center for the Arts, 1212 Wood Street, Center City, Philadelphia

SPRING DATES FOR IN-PERSON AUDITIONS:

Sunday, May 24 - 10am-6pm

Saturday, May 30 - 10am-6pm

Sunday, May 31 - 10am-6pm

Saturday, June 6 - 10am-6pm

For PS and PSP:

Auditioning musicians are expected to perform two different movements from a concerto or sonata – one technical movement and one slower, more melodic movement – without accompaniment; perform major scales up to four flats and four sharps (3 octaves); sight read.

Percussion and harp

Please check our website for specific requirements.

For PSS

Philadelphia Sinfonia Strings' Auditions: Perform 2-octave major scales up to 4 flats and 4 sharps; play a piece that demonstrates your technical ability; and sight-read music provided in the audition.

Openings available for all instruments!

Registration is available on our website: www.philadelphiasinfonia.com/auditions

A Joyous Beginning: PSS opens the Winter Concert Season!

Continued from page 1.

She and PSS proved a wonderful combination of forces, with enormous feeling from Lucia and exemplary accompaniment from PSS.

Ms. Beth was delighted, noting not only the musical growth of her students, but also their character and sense of camaraderie – and of course the incredible contribution from Lucia:

“What a joy to conduct PSS in its first concerto accompaniment, and for the soloist to be one of the inaugural members of PSS was the icing on the cake! We knew from the beginning that Lucia was a special musician and she certainly demonstrated that in this performance. The ensemble has come a long way in just a few months. They are learning how to listen, to tune to each other, execute rhythmic precision, blend their sound, and how to follow the conductor to create expressive phrases. They have also created supportive relationships along the way and have

enjoyed several non-musical activities together. We are looking forward to both musical growth and community activities in the coming months.”

And from the Soloist –

“Performing has always been a unique experience for me, and there is true joy in connecting with the music on stage. It’s always my goal as a performer to help the audience feel the music and understand the heart of the piece. One of the things that makes playing with an orchestra so special is the communication and connection among all of the performers. Sinfonia is the first place that I found that connection, and I loved having it with these young musicians. We all



Lucia Nasrallah performing Bach with PSS.

share the art and language of music, and we get to give it to our audience also. PSS was a joy to work with, and I could see how hard they worked on this concert. I would like to extend my special thanks to Ms. Beth for making this performance a reality.”

~ Lucia Nasrallah, violin

Cello/Bass Sectional with Michael Franz

Michael Franz, Philadelphia Orchestra double bassist, spent an hour on February 7, 2026 with our PS cellos and double basses, working on sections from Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*. Mr. Franz happens to be the private teacher for all of our double basses, but this was likely a first meeting between him and our cello section.

Symphony No. 5 is perhaps Beethoven's most famous symphony, but it is also a difficult piece. Mr. Franz worked through some of the harder sections of all four movements, with thoughts, stories, and information that helped our students understand the work, understand the overall trajectory of the piece,

and bring out the drama of Beethoven. For example:

"What percent are you listening to yourself vs. what percentage are you listening to someone else?"

"This is the first piece to have a theme that repeats from the first through all four movements."

"Movement 3 requires a lot of heavy lifting, and with its many notes, it is easy for it to fall apart."

There was clear improvement as the musicians worked through the tough sections, and with many thanks to Michael Franz, the cellos and basses prepared to perform with class and confidence in the PS concert on March 1, 2026.



On the right, Philadelphia Orchestra bassist, Michael Franz, leads the PS cellos and basses in their sectional on February 7, 2026.

Her Music Spans Quite a Spectrum....

Jahnelle Bey is a Philadelphia Sinfonia 10th grade trombonist whose early influences and subsequent activities, dreams, and energy revolve around music of multiple genres and various cultural derivations. When it comes to music, she is *insatiable*.

She arrives at PS rehearsal each Saturday afternoon after a jazz session at Temple, and if you were to explore deeply enough, you would find that jazz and classical music were deeply ingrained in her from infancy. But so was African drumming and her grandmother's female African American *a cappella* ensemble "NANIKHA" that has collaborated and performed with remarkable celebrities over time.

Jahnelle attends the Philadelphia Performing Arts School, has been a member of Sinfonia, since 8th grade, initially in PSP, and, beginning in middle school, has spent every spare minute pursuing one musical extracurricular after another.

Those outside school activities have ranged from the Philadelphia School

District's All-City Arts and Creative Learning program where she has joined classical and jazz ensembles as well as one for dance, to summers in the All-City Summer Camp at the Mann Center, to the jazz education program at Philadelphia's Clef Club and William Patterson University's "Heart of Jazz" Program.

She has received awards in Philadelphia's Music in the Parks competitions, beginning in 2023, when she was named "Most Outstanding Soloist" in the jazz band competition....

Jahnelle has quite simply taken advantage of every opportunity available to study and perform a broad range of music, and – clearly – she also enjoys herself!

Asked about her dreams – where and what she hopes to find herself doing and becoming as she grows up, Jahnelle somewhat shyly suggests she wants to perform, but not just music on a page or even in the footsteps of those whose music is known.... Jahnelle wants to be creative and invent her own music that marries all the genres, cultural influences,



Janelle Bey, trombone.

and artistic disciplines she has been exposed to.

It is an ambition that she *just might realize*, given the spirit and determination she has brought to life with music thus far. Tempered by a quiet humility, however, Jahnelle's story reflects her sense of good fortune rather than entitlement, and as she tells it, she is deeply grateful for everything that has come her way, including the remarkable opportunities she experiences week after week as a trombonist in Philadelphia Sinfonia.

Editor's Note: Jahnelle's story suggested itself as a "sister" story to that of Nazir Ebo, a double bassist in Sinfonia a number of years ago, now a celebrated jazz drummer, who was one of the two alumni profiled in our Fall 2025 newsletter. See Sonata Fall 2025.

Remaining 2025 – 2026 Concert Schedule

PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA (PS)

Friday, May 22, 2026; 8 PM
Perelman Theater Kimmel Center
Philadelphia, PA

In collaboration with The Philly Pops & Ron Kerber, saxophone

PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA CHAMBER ORCHSTRA (PSCO)

Tuesday, May 12, 2026; 7 PM
Foulkeways, Gwynedd, PA

PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA STRINGS (PSS)

Saturday, May 2, 2026; 7 PM
Howard Center for the Arts

PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA PLAYERS (PSP)

Sunday, May 17, 2026; 3 PM
Temple Performing Arts Center
Philadelphia, PA

With soloist Michael Franz, double bass

PS Mid-Winter Concert Elicits Music Director's High Praise

“Bravissimo everyone!!! This past week was not just about performing great music. It was about growth.”

Mr. Linus' email to PS musicians the day after their March 1st mid-winter concert elicited a strong, valuable statement that endorses the success of Sinfonia's orchestral training process and the growing collaborative relationship among the musicians themselves and the growing collaborative relationship between the musicians and their conductor.

What a tribute it is to the investment of our students, to their work in rehearsals and to the external supports, like the cello/bass sectional explored elsewhere in this newsletter and the side-by-side rehearsal with members of The Philadelphia Orchestra, discussed on page 1.



PS Violins at TPAC, March 1.



PS Basses at TPAC, March 1.

This concert's program, titled "Fate Now Conquers," was demanding. Drawn from a broad spectrum of repertoire: an overture from a rarely performed opera, *The Wreckers*, written by 19th/20th Century composer, Ethel Smyth; Brahms' *Tragic Overture Op. 81*; a very new work, *Fate Now Conquers*, by Carlos Simon, commissioned and performed by The Philadelphia Orchestra in 2020, the program ended with Beethoven's dramatic *Symphony No. 5* – one of the best-known works in the classical cannon, but a tough

one to perform. But PS did it proud!

Rounding out the afternoon's performance at Temple's Performing Arts Center, Sinfonia's Chamber Orchestra, directed this year by Maestra Danielle Garrett, gave a lovely rendition of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *Novelletten No. 4 in D Major*. Always top-notch, PSCO's first performance this season bode well for their own full chamber concerts yet to come.

With Strength and Maturity PSP Plays the Trinity Center

While it is rare for PSP (our advanced-intermediate ensemble) to perform an *entire* symphony, when it came to Schubert's *Symphony No. 5* this season, as their conductor, Ms. Garrett, said, this group of musicians just dove into it, and the result: a beautifully-performed full four-movement symphony graced the second half of PSP's winter concert on February 15, 2026. Bravo, PSP!

Overall, the concert was wide-ranging, opening with Arriaga's *Los Esclavos Felices Overture* and Gabriel Faure's famous *Pavane*, and moving on to Amy Beach's *Bal Masque for Chamber Orchestra* – a delightful closer to the first half of the concert.

PSP was also joined in the first half of the concert by PSS performing the *Finale* to William Boyce's *Overture No. 5*. This was an opportunity for PSS to move beyond the Howard Center, it's usual performance venue, and play in the glorious hall of the Trinity Center for Urban Life at 22nd and Spruce Streets.

And then, after intermission and Schubert's symphony, the afternoon came to a close on another high note with Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio Overture K.384*, a stunning work, again, well-played. What a glorious afternoon – a tribute to the musicians of PSP and their conductor, Ms. Danielle Garrett!



PSP violins in concert at the Trinity Center; February 15, 2026.



PSP cellos at the Trinity Center concert; February 15, 2026.

ALUM PROFILE:

Tracy Nguyen: From Bassoon Performance to Music Librarian

Many of us think, “Wow, I’ve really enjoyed studying music, and I’d love to perform, but I’m on a path to become... *something else!*”

By sharing her story, Tracy Nguyen has told us how she successfully made that transition – to music librarianship! Before Tracy started her studies as a chemistry major at Ursinus College in 2014, she had found music to be a “fun and fulfilling extracurricular” activity. After her freshman year, Tracy joined the All-City Philadelphia Orchestra on its summer tour of Italy. Not surprisingly, that trip helped Tracy to realize that she wanted to pursue music professionally, so she took a gap year from college to hone her musical skills and applied to be a music major.

Tracy joined Sinfonia during her gap year. She shares: “Sinfonia was a fulfilling training experience [for] someone between colleges, but [who] wanted to keep their chops going. . . . Maestro Gary White was both a caring and demanding conductor and educator. There was always a lesson to take away from each rehearsal.” Tracy loved performing with Sinfonia, and then went on to study bassoon – not chemistry! – at Temple University, where she initially studied with Michelle Rosen.

At Temple, Tracy earned her Bachelor’s degree in Music Theory and Performance and her Master’s degree in Bassoon Performance, studying with William Short, Principal Bassoon of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra.

[1] Readers may be interested to learn that Tracy found this position through MOLA, the Major Orchestra Librarian’s Association, Inc. (www.mola-inc.org).



Tracy Nguyen, Music Librarian.

While at Temple, where Danielle Garrett, Sinfonia’s PSP Conductor, is the Music Librarian, Tracy was assigned to work with Ms. Garrett in Temple’s music library. After completing her degrees, Tracy worked as an assistant librarian with the Brevard Music Center in North Carolina, and eventually became the Principal Librarian of the New Jersey Symphony.^[1]

“Working at the New Jersey Symphony has been a life-changing experience for me. I have a full-time job . . . within the music industry, doing something I really enjoy. Working in artistic operations from a performance background, I realized [that]

performing was not what I needed to feel purpose or fulfillment in my career. I like being backstage and a part of the behind-the-scenes aspect of performances. I get to work with musicians [from] all walks of life, and it is deeply humbling.”

“Performance librarianship, in a nutshell, is preparing the orchestral materials for all people involved in concert production (i.e., conductors, musicians, soloists sometimes, recording crews, etc.). Day-to-day work may involve scanning parts for distribution, marking in cuts and bowings, and performing various administrative duties. I also attend every rehearsal and concert to distribute folders and have the unique responsibility of putting the scores on the conductor’s stand between pieces. . . . I’ve been very fortunate to work with the amazing musicians of the New Jersey Symphony and world-renowned artists such as Hilary Hahn, TwoSet Violin, and Yo-Yo Ma.”

Indeed, Tracy is very satisfied with her current role in performance librarianship. So, Sinfonians – here’s another fascinating music-oriented career to consider!

Please feel free to contact Tracy at nguyen.vu.tracy@gmail.com.

~ Diane Penneys Edelman

ALUMNI UPDATE:

In the fall of 2021, we featured our double bass alumnus, Michael Martin, who had then completed a masters degree in bass performance at Northwestern’s Bienen School of Music and was beginning to find opportunities to perform in various ensembles across the country, including three seasons with the New World Symphony. Most recently, however, Michael has secured a position in the bass section of the Cincinnati Orchestra.

We send congratulations to Michael upon this new position and recognize with appreciation various other accomplishments of his, including the creation of “Black Reflections,” a three-part panel discussion series on racial justice in music, featuring Black luminaries of classical music and jazz such as Chi-chi Nwanoku, Christian McBride, and Dr. Tammy Kernodle.

ALUM PROFILE:

Nolan Wenik: Bassoon; Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra

Nolan Wenik's entrée into music is a truly great story. As a 4th grader, Nolan was introduced to the saxophone almost by chance – his family had one in the closet from when his older brother had played it, and this inheritance was the start of his journey.

Thinking that he was “truly terrible” playing sax in the first year, Nolan's feelings changed when he participated in a summer music camp and its jazz program. There, he connected with his first private teacher, who “really made things fun” and introduced him to classical repertoire. And once Nolan entered middle school, he discovered the bassoon in the same way that he had discovered the saxophone – he found one in the school's closet, though it was falling apart!

But this did not diminish Nolan's interest in the bassoon. Rather, he went home and fell down a rabbit hole of bassoon videos on YouTube. This enthusiasm convinced his middle school band director to acquire a new bassoon, allowing Nolan to start in 7th grade. He joined the inaugural Sinfonia Players the following year as a clarinet player before switching to bassoon, then moved on to PS, where he remained through high school as a bassoonist.

Nolan's start as a bassoonist was charmed. His first private teacher, Dan Myers, “paved the way” for his interest in music. Both he and Nolan's middle school band director, Brian Stahl, generated

similar excitement for Nolan. In addition, he studied clarinet with Curtis Institute alum Charles Salinger, who “expand[ed] [Nolan's] awareness of classical music in a way that could directly translate to bassoon.” He studied bassoon with Michelle Rosen during high school, and then with David McGill at Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music.

Bienen was a “fantastic” experience for Nolan, who wound up having “more opportunities to play than [he] knew what to do with.” He loved and was inspired by his lessons and treasured playing chamber music—he even traveled for competitions with his wind quintet.

After college, Nolan returned to Sinfonia for two years as its Program Associate, which he found to be a great experience. It showed him “what a career in music can look like – the staff and coaches all dabbled in most ... of the various aspects of the industry, [including] teaching, performing, conducting, or administration.” Nolan was also inspired by the focus, commitment, and artistry of the students whom he guided.

Now, Nolan is earning his Master's degree in bassoon performance at the University of Houston with Elise Wagner, second bassoonist with the Houston Symphony. He recently won the second bassoon position with the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra (a mere 4-hour drive from Houston) and loves the welcoming, professional environment.



Nolan Wenik, Bassoon.

Nolan still reserves a “special shoutout” for Sinfonia Board President Dawn Evans, who invited him to play with the Orchestra Society of Philadelphia when he returned to Sinfonia as its Program Associate, for “renew[ing] [his]relationship with the bassoon and orchestral music.” That relationship has blossomed beautifully.

Please feel free to contact Nolan at nwenik12@gmail.com.

~ Diane Penneys Edelman

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Mission Statement

Philadelphia Sinfonia Association supports the artistic growth of young musicians in the Delaware Valley by providing high-level ensemble experience in a supportive educational environment.

We believe that the pursuit of excellence requires performers with integrity, working together toward a common goal. Thus, our mission is three-fold: to provide ensemble performance opportunities for young musicians, to achieve the highest level of artistic advancement, and to educate young people broadly to be strong citizens and leaders as well as responsible musicians.

We recruit from a demographically diverse student population to provide an opportunity to anyone who musically qualifies and to enrich the experience of all members of the organization.



PS winds side-by-side with The Philadelphia Orchestra. (Photo credit: Jeff Fusco)



PS cellos and basses side-by-side with The Philadelphia Orchestra. (Photo credit: Jeff Fusco)



PS violins side-by-side with The Philadelphia Orchestra, February 28, 2026. (Photo credit: Jeff Fusco)