

A Return to Music Making

March 2021

**this document will be updated frequently*

A Message From Our Executive Director

A Return to Music Making is a collection of policies and COVID-safe practices that allow the Albuquerque Youth Symphony Program to provide robust, intensive music education experiences and opportunities for our students in a safe, healthy manner.

Our top priorities are (1) the health and safety of our students, staff, volunteers, and families, and (2) the fulfillment of our mission to provide an intensive and fulfilling music education for our students. We have carefully considered information made available to us from a variety of resources, chiefly education, government, and health authorities, as well as music educators from around the world who, like us, are navigating uncharted waters of symphonic music education and music making during a world-wide pandemic. A partial list of resources that have informed these Return to Music Making guidelines is found in the Introduction below; we review and assess new information on a daily basis that continues to inform our plans for the fall and beyond. The available information makes clear that a number of collective steps are crucial to mitigate the risks associated with COVID-19, such as using face coverings and personal protective equipment (PPE) properly, practicing social distancing, and enhancing existing cleaning and disinfecting practices.

As we have all experienced in recent months, the information – and therefore also the recommendations – surrounding COVID-19 are very fluid. The only certainty we have is that the return to “normal” will take some time. We will need to be flexible in responding to evolving information and adapt our plans based on lessons learned as we go. And of course, we must at all times remain mindful of and in compliance with existing restrictions and guidelines put out by our local governmental and health officials.

The most significant component in a successful Return to Music Making is your patience and cooperation. While safety and health are of paramount importance, we know well that our students yearn to make music together and that their music education is perhaps more vital to them now than ever before. With every member of our AYSP community abiding by the practices contained in A Return to Music Making, AYSP is best positioned to fulfill our mission to our students in a safe manner as we see our way through the pandemic together. We will take

individual circumstances into account, and I am available to discuss your questions or concerns at any time.

While this pandemic has presented immeasurable challenges to all of us in myriad ways, the Albuquerque Youth Symphony Program family has pulled together and offered strength and support in many creative ways since 1955. In this, our 67th year of continuous existence and excellence, I'm counting on us all to continue that spirit of optimism and cooperation as we plan for A Return to Music Making.

Harmoniously,



Norlynn Blocker Price
Executive Director

Introduction

The guidelines contained in A Return to Music Making have been developed by your AYSP staff so that our students, volunteers, parents, and staff can work together safely in our facility. The objectives guiding the development of A Return to Music Making are (a) to prioritize the health and safety of our students, staff, volunteers, and families; (b) to maximize the number and quality of safe, in-person learning opportunities for our students; and (c) to make decisions based on science and available data.

The resources that have informed the development of A Return to Music Making include, without limitation:

U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration. (OSHA 3990-03-2020). *Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19*. Retrieved from: <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>;

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (January 4, 2021). *Considerations for Schools*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-staff.html#music-choir-arts>;

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (April 28, 2020). *Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>;

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (Accessed March 12, 2021). *Strategies for Protecting K-12 School Staff from COVID-19*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-staff.html#music-choir-arts>

New Mexico Public Education Department. (March 8, 2021). *COVID-19 Response Toolkit for New Mexico's Public Schools*. Retrieved from: https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/NMPED_COVID19ResponseToolkit_public.pdf;

National Federation of High School Associations and the National Association for Music Education. (June 19, 2020). *Fall 2020 Guidance for Music Education*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nfhs.org/articles/fall-2020-guidance-for-music-education/>;

National Federation of High School Associations and the National Association for Music Education (March 10, 2021). *NHFS Study Helpful for New Affiliate Members*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nfhs.org/articles/nfhs-aerosol-study-helpful-for-new-affiliate-members/>.

National Federation of High School Associations, National Association of Music Education, and the National Association of Music Merchants Foundation. (April 24, 2020). *COVID-19 Instrument Cleaning Guidelines*. Retrieved from: <https://nafme.org/covid-19-instrument-cleaning-guidelines/>;

Miller, Shelly L., Vance, Marina, Hertzberg, Jean, and Toohey, Darin, The University of Colorado Boulder College of Engineering and Applied Science. (June 2020). *Statement of Work: Aerosol Generation from Playing Band Instruments, Singing and Performing and Risk of Infectious Disease Transmission*. Retrieved from: <https://acda.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/risk-of-transmission-instrument-playing-vsfinal.pdf>;

American String Teachers Association. (July 1, 2020). *Resuming Classroom Instruction During COVID-19*. Retrieved from: <https://astastrings.org>;

Moss, Kirk D. Ph.D. (June 18, 2020). *Risk Management Plan for Face-To-Face Music Ensembles, Private Music Lessons, and Theatre Rehearsals: A Starting Point for Fall 2020*. Presented at League of American Orchestras 2020 General Conference, June 2020; National Federation of High School Associations and College Band Directors National Association (July 13, 2020). *Performing Arts Aerosol Study*. Retrieved from <https://www.nfhs.org/media/4029958/preliminary-testing-report-7-13-20.pdf>; and

Weaver, James and Spede, Mark. (July 16, 2020). *Preliminary Recommendations from International Performing Arts Aerosol Study Based on Initial Testing Results*. Retrieved from <https://www.nfhs.org/media/4029965/preliminary-recommendations-from-international-performing-arts-aerosol-study.pdf>;

Weaver, James and Spede, Mark. (August 6, 2020). *International Coalition of Performing Arts Aerosol Study, Round 2*. Retrieved from <https://www.nfhs.org/media/4119369/aerosol-study-prelim-results-round-2-final-updated.pdf>;

Weaver, James and Spede, Mark. (November 13, 2020). *International Coalition of Performing Arts Aerosol Study, Report 3*. Retrieved from <https://www.nfhs.org/media/4294910/third-aerosol-report.pdf>.

All of the guidelines outlined below are subject to change, and are in fact expected to change. We will provide updates to A Return to Music Making as and when changes are made. It is imperative that our staff, students, volunteers, and families remain aware of and compliant with these guidelines as they evolve.

A Return to Music Making is organized into six areas of focus:

1. Prepare and Support our People
2. Observe Social Distancing and Personal Hygiene Practices

3. Prepare our Building
4. Control Access to Our Building and Throughout our Space
5. Reduce Touchpoints and Increase Cleaning
6. Communicate!

Following the discussion of these topics, you will find sections specifically addressing face and bell coverings for woodwind and brass instruments, cleaning and disinfecting of all instruments, and frequently asked questions.

1. Prepare and Support Our People

We continue to monitor the evolving COVID-19 situation and will adjust our approach as needed to maintain a safe facility for our staff, students, volunteers, and parents. Below are the general principles guiding our Return to Music Making, as well as the safety protocols and steps everyone must take to help keep everyone in the AYSP community safe and healthy.

How We Are Helping to Keep You Safe

<p>Increasing Cleaning and Disinfecting in Common Areas</p> 	<p>Providing disinfectants for staff and volunteers to use in common areas</p> 	<p>Enforcing social distancing</p> 	<p>Adjusting rehearsal schedules and group sizes to reduce density</p> 
<p>Controlling Access to the AYSP Building</p> 	<p>Providing Face Coverings and PPE for high-touch tasks</p> 	<p>Reducing touchpoints</p> 	<p>Requiring everyone to affirm they are healthy before entering the AYSP building</p> 

How We All Must Help to Keep Each Other Safe

Your participation and cooperation are essential to ensuring the health and safety of the entire AYSP community. All of us – staff, students, volunteers, and family members – must agree to take several reasonable precautions to minimize the risk of transmitting COVID-19 to others.

A. Daily Health Check Verification

Before entering the AYSP facility, and in fact even *before beginning the commute to the AYSP building*, each AYSP staff member, student, volunteer, and parent planning to enter the building must be able to answer “no” to each of the following questions:

1. Are you currently experiencing, or have you experienced, within the past 14 days, any symptoms of COVID-19? Symptoms include:

- Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Fatigue
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Headache
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Sore throat
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Diarrhea
2. Do you have pending COVID-19 test results, or have you tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 14 days?
 3. Have you had close contact with, cared for, or live in the same household as someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, or has exhibited COVID-19 symptoms (see above), within the last 14 days?

You may only enter the AYSP facility if you can truthfully affirm a “no” answer to each of the questions above. ***If your answer to any of the above questions is “yes,” do not come to the AYSP building.*** If your presence is expected (e.g., you are a conductor or a student and have a rehearsal, you are a parent manager or other office volunteer and someone is expecting you to serve at the AYSP building at a certain day/time, etc.), you must contact the appropriate person on the AYSP staff as soon as you become aware that you cannot come to the building.

B. Temperature Scanning

All AYSP staff, students, volunteers, visitors, and parents will have their temperature taken by an AYSP staff member upon entering the AYSP building. Any person with a temperature of 100.4 F degrees or greater will not be permitted to remain in the building. An AYSP staff member will note the name of the person and his or her temperature and will also verify that the person has answered “no” to each of the Daily Health Check Verification questions above.

C. Hand Sanitizing

All AYSP staff, students, volunteers, visitors, and parents will use hand sanitizer upon arrival at the AYSP building. A contact-free hand sanitizer station will be located just inside the entry door to the building.

* Close contact is defined as being within six feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 48 hours before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic people, 10 days prior to positive specimen collection). Centers for Disease Control (June 5, 2020). *Public Health Guidance for Community-Related Exposure*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/public-health-recommendations.html>.

2. Observe Social Distancing and Personal Hygiene Practices

A. Social Distancing

Social distancing must be observed at all times inside the AYSP building. In addition to relying on individual efforts, your AYSP staff have taken measures to promote social distancing by altering rehearsal schedules and group sizes to decrease density, rearranging furniture and seating areas, adding signage to promote appropriate spacing, and creating traffic patterns and designated areas for student seating to minimize congestion.

All students arriving for rehearsal will enter the AYSP building through the North parking lot door into Castro Hall, and all students leaving rehearsal will exit the AYSP building through the South parking lot doors.

With the exception of Parent Managers and Preparatory String Orchestra parents dropping off or picking up their students, parents and siblings are not permitted to congregate in the lobby or other common areas of the AYSP building.

We have made some changes to our rehearsal schedules so that there will be only one ensemble rehearsing in the AYSP building at a time. This spacing out of rehearsal days and times will significantly reduce the number of people in the building at any given time and will also reduce density in common areas.

We will utilize our largest rehearsal areas as much as possible and spread students out in those spaces. String players and percussionists will be spaced six feet apart in rehearsal rooms, and wind and brass players will be spaced ten feet apart. Large ensembles will be divided into two or more smaller groups during rehearsal times so that these distances may be maintained.

B. Personal Hygiene Practices

All AYSP staff members, students, visitors, volunteers, and parents are expected to:

- Bring and wear your face covering at all times while in the AYSP building;
- Practice social distancing by remaining at least six feet from others at all times;
- Avoid touching common surfaces as much as possible;
- Wash hands thoroughly (for at least 20 seconds) or use hand sanitizer (with an alcohol content of 60% or greater) frequently, including before and after touching any objects or surfaces in shared spaces; and
- Avoid touching your face, mouth, eyes, and nose.

During Rehearsals: All students must wear face coverings during rehearsals, and some students will have additional requirements as well in order to protect themselves and others:

Stringed Instruments. Students playing violin, viola, cello, string bass, and harp must wear face coverings at all times.

Percussion Instruments. Students playing percussion instruments must wear face coverings at all times **and** must also either wear gloves while handling percussion equipment, or must sanitize all equipment used during the rehearsal at the conclusion of the rehearsal (sanitizing wipes will be provided and will be located in the percussion area of the rehearsal space).

Woodwind Instruments. Students playing flute, clarinet, oboe, and bassoon must wear face coverings at all times. Face coverings for wind students will either need to be designed so that they have an opening for the instrument's mouthpiece, or the student must be able to fit the face covering (without an opening for the mouth) entirely over the instrument mouthpiece while the student is playing. **Additionally**, wind students must place a cover over the end of their instrument to capture any aerosols that escape from the instrument during playing. AYSP will provide specially designed masks to all wind instrument students free of charge.

Students **will not clean their instruments** in the rehearsal space following rehearsal. Instrument cleaning may be done in the car after rehearsal or when the student returns home.

Brass Instruments. Students playing trumpet, trombone, horn, euphonium, and tuba must wear face coverings at all times. Face coverings for brass students will need to be designed so that they have an opening for the instrument's mouthpiece. Additionally, brass students must place a cover over the bell of their instrument to capture any aerosols that escape from the instrument during playing. AYSP will provide specially designed masks to all brass instrument students free of charge.

Finally, brass students must also place an **absorbent pad** (such as a puppy pad) on the floor under their instruments to catch any condensation that accumulates inside the instrument that could spill onto the floor during rehearsal or while re-casing the instrument after the rehearsal. Spit valves may not be emptied on the floor but may be emptied onto the absorbent pads. Each student is responsible for properly disposing of his or her absorbent pad in one of the trash containers located at the rehearsal space exit. AYSP will provide absorbent pads for brass instrument students to use free of charge.

Students **will not clean their instruments** in the rehearsal space following rehearsal. Instrument cleaning may be done in the car after rehearsal or when the student returns home.

3. Prepare Our Building

AYSP has taken the following steps to ensure the health and safety of our students, volunteers, parents, and staff members:

- Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning – all HVAC units have been upgraded with vents to introduce fresh, outdoor air into all areas of the building; MERV 13 filters have been installed in all HVAC units, along with UV lights in the HVAC intakes to sanitize air that is recirculated into the building; and a complete air change occurs every 10 minutes in every room of the building;
- Janitorial Service – our building custodian cleans and sanitizes all common areas of the building at the end of every rehearsal day, and we have purchased additional disinfectants and adopted a more rigorous cleaning routine;
- Cleaning and ventilation of rehearsal spaces between rehearsals;
- Visitor and Vendor health screening;
- Clear, easy-to-follow traffic patterns and signage throughout the building for entry, exit, and moving within the building to reduce density;
- Increased staff presence to ensure COVID-safe practices are maintained at all times; and
- Enhanced cleaning and response plan if/when warranted, such as in the case of anyone who has spent time in the AYSP building has contracted COVID-19.

We have an ample supply of disinfectant spray cleaner, disinfecting wipes, paper towels, and gloves for use by our staff and volunteers to clean surfaces between rehearsals.

4. Control Access to Our Building and Throughout Our Space

As always, the AYSP building will generally be locked, and visitors to the building are not received except by appointment and before and during rehearsals. All visitors to the AYSP building must (i) complete the daily health check verification, (ii) pass the temperature screening, (iii) use hand sanitizer upon entering the building; (iv) wear face coverings, and (v) observe social distancing guidelines at all times while inside the building.

Parents – other than ensemble parent managers and other volunteers with assigned tasks – are not permitted inside the AYSP building during rehearsals. Parents of Preparatory String Orchestra students may come inside the building to drop off or pick up their students but must abide by the Daily Health Check Verification and temperature scanning procedures described above prior to entering the building.

At all times while our students and volunteers are in the AYSP building, only two people will be permitted in each of the bathrooms at a given time. Members of the AYSP staff and volunteers will monitor bathrooms during rehearsal break times to ensure bathrooms do not become overcrowded.

5. Reduce Touchpoints and Increase Cleaning

Your AYSP staff are taking the following steps to minimize contact with high-touch surfaces:

- While the vending machine, water machine, and water fountain at the AYSP building are in good working condition, students are encouraged to bring their own (full) personal water containers for rehearsals and any snacks for break times.
- No-contact hand sanitizer dispensers are located at the entry door, outside the restrooms, and at exits from rehearsal spaces.
- No-contact hand soap dispensers have been installed in the bathrooms and staff kitchen.
- To the extent possible, entry and exit doors will be propped open during high-traffic times before and after rehearsals.
- At the end of rehearsals, students will **not** put away their chairs or stands (these items will be cleaned and sanitized by AYSP staff and volunteers and then put away).

6. Communicate!

AYSP will communicate regularly with staff, students, parents, and volunteers to ensure that everyone is aware of and understands these guidelines and procedures, as they may be modified from time to time. Your cooperation with the steps we are taking to protect everyone's safety and well-being and your active participation, in these procedures are critical to our success.

Please ensure that all AYSP email accounts (___@aysmusic.org) are recognized senders for your email account so that messages from AYSP are not sent to your spam or junk mail folders. Most COVID-19 related communications will be in the form of a Read and Heed.

For any questions or concerns related to these guidelines or any other issues concerning the pandemic, please contact our Executive Director, Norlynn Blocker Price, at (505) 875-1319, ext. 117 or norlynn@aysmusic.org.

Some Guidelines for Face and Instrument Coverings for Woodwind and Brass Students

Preliminary recommendations by the International Coalition Performing Arts Aerosol Study recommend (as of July 16, 2020) that “if players wear surgical style masks with a slit for mouthpiece AND bell covers, aerosol emission is reduced.” The recommendation further states that “Flute players can put the headjoint between their mouth and mask...and use a “flute sock attached to the foot.” For examples of both the mask use by flutists and the “flute sock,” please refer to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3T6h1muUic> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7if6TMZy5OM&feature=youtu.be>.

For brass students, woodwind students playing oboe, clarinet, or bassoon, and any flutists who choose to wear a mask with an opening for the mouthpiece, AYSP strongly recommends a mask with an overlapping opening (*i.e.*, an opening that will remain closed when the student is not playing the instrument), or a mask that has a flap that covers the mouthpiece opening when the student is not playing the instrument. Face coverings for winds and brass students may be purchased here:

<https://www.tmfoursandtravel.com/Content/assets/pdfs/TMF%20Mask%20Letter%202020%20v2.pdf>

As for covering the bells (or, the end of the flute), the preliminary recommendation of the International Coalition is two layers of fabric that is 80 denier (“denier” refers to the amount of transparency or thickness of a fabric used in making pantyhose or tights. Denier ranges from 5 to 100, with 5 being the most transparent; any denier over 50 would be a fabric similar to “opaque” hosiery or stockings.) Accordingly, bell or flute covers may be fashioned from a double layer of fabric from opaque tights with a denier of 80 would comply with the recommendation. Coverings for the bells of instruments may be purchased here:

<https://www.tmfoursandtravel.com/Content/assets/pdfs/TMF%20Mask%20Letter%202020%20v2.pdf>

Some Guidelines for Instrument Cleaning and Sanitizing

All AYSP students are responsible for the care, cleaning, and sanitizing of their own instruments. Students should **NOT** share instruments or any instrument accessories or other supplies. Percussion students must not share mallets without properly disinfecting them (or, percussion students may wear gloves while handling mallets).

Here are some guidelines that all music students should follow to help prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- Prior to taking their instruments out of the case and again at the conclusion of class, students should wash or disinfect their hands using soap and water or an alcohol-based sanitizer.
- Students should refrain from sharing supplies such as valve oils, rosin, pencils, instruments or other personal items.
- Students should not touch or move other students' instruments, mouthpieces, or cases.
- Wind students should spray their mouthpiece with Steri-Spray at the conclusion of each practice rehearsal or performance, prior to placing the instrument in the case. (NOTE: The active ingredient in Steri-Spray is quaternary ammonium, as confirmed by the manufacturer. This active ingredient is listed on the [Environmental Protection Agency's list of approved COVID-19 disinfectants](#).)
- Students should provide their own supplies as they are able. When this is not feasible, shared equipment such as mallets, cymbals, or other percussion equipment should be disinfecting prior to another student using the same piece of equipment.
- Students should clean the instrument, neck, and mouthpiece as recommended by [NAFME's Instrument Cleaning Guidelines](#) (link below).
- Percussion and other keyboard instruments present fewer hygienic issues due to the way that they're constructed. Based on [recommendations](#) from the National Federation of State High School Associations, the best way that these students can maintain a healthy environment is by simply washing their hands before and after use for a minimum of 20 seconds.
- Disinfecting wipes may be used on bell kits, metal hardware, rubber mallets, and sticks. Be mindful of any residue that may be left behind. For drum heads, only use non-astringent wipes, to avoid damaging the head.

Please check out the following links for helpful information about cleaning various instruments:

<https://nafme.org/covid-19-instrument-cleaning-guidelines/>

<https://www.nfhs.org/articles/covid-19-instrument-cleaning-guidelines/>

Additionally, check out the links below for videos about cleaning musical instruments:

- **Woodwinds**
- (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v478qVPINxY&list=PLEDbfrTs4wYvu2oqJP672N608cYPCr2Ny&index=3>)
- **Brass**
- (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPBR_s6rpmc&list=PLEDbfrTs4wYvu2oqJP672N608cYPCr2Ny&index=1)
- **Stringed Instruments**
- (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BPnjf-YEQ2g&feature=youtu.be>)

Once the instrument is cleaned, it may be sanitized. Below are links to videos about sanitizing wind and string instruments:

- **Wind Instruments**
- (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=byBd5sXryy8&feature=youtu.be>)
- **Stringed Instruments**
- (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZNUi3XxZuw&feature=youtu.be>)

Frequently Asked Questions

We know you have questions, and we have attempted to answer a number of likely questions below. Remember that we intend to update our plans, and these guidelines, as new information becomes available and as we are guided by our governmental and health authorities. If you have a question that is not answered below or elsewhere in A Return to Music Making, please contact Executive Director Norlynn Blocker Price at (505) 875-1319, ext. 117 or norlynn@aysmusic.org.

Q: What changes should we expect for large ensembles?

A: *Large ensembles are going to be, frankly, smaller as long as social distancing of at least 6-feet is required or recommended. Our two largest rehearsal spaces can each accommodate 40 students spaced 6 feet apart. We will, accordingly, divide our largest ensembles into smaller groups in order to accommodate appropriate spacing. These smaller groups will rehearse each week, but during different time slots. In other words, only one AYSP rehearsal group will rehearse at the AYSP building at a given time, so that we can control the number of students in the building and accommodate social distancing requirements.*

Q: What about wind and brass instruments?

A: *The International Coalition of Performing Arts Aerosol Study (now in three phases, each cited in the Introduction above) recommends that students playing woodwind and brass instruments wear face masks with openings for their mouthpieces and covers for the bells of their instruments. Accordingly, AYSP requires that all woodwind and brass students wear face coverings and bell covers in compliance with these recommendations. Brass students will also be required to place absorbent pads (such as puppy pads) on the floor in front of them to catch condensation from their instruments during rehearsal.*

Based upon the most recent findings cited in the International Coalition Performing Arts Aerosol Study, we now know that with masks, bell covers, proper and frequent room ventilation, cleaning, and diligent social distancing, it is safe for wind and brass musicians to rehearse indoors without an increased risk of aerosol spreading.

As additional information and/or recommendations become available we will make any necessary modifications to our practices and plans in order to ensure the safest possible environment for all of our students and staff during rehearsals.

Q: What changes should we expect for concerts?

A: *We currently do not plan to have public performances in the fall semester. Assuming our ensembles are able to rehearse in person such that we can prepare repertoire for performance, however, we are working on plans for ensembles to perform some pieces in a simulcast or live-*

stream format. We are also exploring the possibility of virtual performances by combining individual or small-group performances into a single video performance. We are currently planning for all ensembles to perform concerts in the spring, whether to public live audiences, or in a simulcast or live-streamed format.

Q: Are AYSP's rehearsal spaces large enough for ensembles to rehearse safely?

A: *Several areas of AYSP's building are suitable for distance-spaced ensemble rehearsals when the large ensembles are split into two (or more) separate rehearsal groups. The largest rehearsal spaces – Marie Robertson Hall and Castro Hall – can easily accommodate one half of most of the large ensembles in a socially distant seating formation. The large open space in the office area of the building can also be used as a rehearsal space and can accommodate one half of the Youth Symphony, which is AYSP's largest ensemble. As mentioned elsewhere in this Return to Music Making, all students will be spaced six feet apart from other musicians (i.e., each student will occupy 36 square feet).*

Q: Will AYSP chamber ensembles meet this year?

A: *Yes, that is our current plan! As long as prevailing public health orders and other regulations or gathering limitations allow at least a small number of students and a coach to gather in the AYSP building, we plan to offer our chamber music program as we have in the past. All of AYSP's rehearsal halls and sectional rooms will be sufficiently large for our chamber ensembles to meet safely with adequate distance spacing.*

Q: What arrangements have been made for cleaning rehearsal and other shared spaces?

A: *No-contact hand sanitizer stations will be located in various high-traffic areas throughout the AYSP building. No-contact hand soap dispensers will be installed in the restrooms and staff kitchen. Disinfectants and cleaning supplies will be available in all rehearsal spaces and common areas. Students in all rehearsal groups will begin rehearsals in Marie Robertson Hall. After 30 minutes, the students will move to the large office area at the back of the building for the remaining 30 minutes of rehearsal time. Each rehearsal space will be cleaned and sanitized as soon as the students leave the area. Our custodian will thoroughly clean and disinfect all rehearsal spaces and common areas after each rehearsal day).*

Our custodian will clean the building five times per week, following rehearsals on each of our five rehearsal days. Cleaning tasks will prioritize COVID-19 related sanitizing of restrooms, rehearsal space(s) and any common areas where students, staff, and volunteers have spent time.

Q: If ensembles are split into two (or more) groups for rehearsals, does that mean that students will have less rehearsal time at the AYSP building?

A: *Although in-person rehearsal time at the AYSP building will be reduced in order to reduce density, allow adequate ventilation, and keep adequate spacing for rehearsals, conductors are planning additional learning time each week for students to gather virtually and do a “deeper dive” on the music on which they are working and to tackle other music education topics that students often are not able to spend time on during a “normal” AYSP season. All in all, between the in-person rehearsals and the “deep dive” virtual sessions, AYSP students will continue to receive the same excellent music education opportunities for which AYSP has always been known.*

Q: What happens if another stay-at-home order is imposed, and in-person rehearsals are not possible?

A: *The AYSP staff has planned for several contingencies, one of which obviously involves our program having to switch to all-virtual learning for some period of time during the current season. With proper planning, high-quality music education can continue even in a virtual environment. Indeed, virtual instruction provides some unique opportunities for an individualized approach that will benefit all learners, including video modeling and differentiation opportunities.*

Q: Will AYSP refund or reimburse tuition if AYSP is not able to conduct in-person rehearsals?

A: *For the first time, during the 2020-2021 season families will be asked to register and pay tuition for only one semester at a time. Tuition for each semester, once paid, is nonrefundable.*

AYSP conductors have plans for virtual instruction, in addition to in-person rehearsals, so that our students can continue to learn and develop as musicians and to grow as an ensemble, even if ensembles are not able to meet in person. Our AYSP conductors, like all of the school teachers in our community and indeed throughout the country, will have to work even harder this year to educate their students in multiple ways and formats.

Approximately one-half of the funding upon which AYSP relies to serve our students each year comes from student tuition, and AYSP is committed to providing a high-quality music education to our student community even if we are forced to defer in-person rehearsals for some period of time during the year.

Q: Will AYSP’s attendance policy change in light of the pandemic?

A: *We have updated our Musician’s Handbook, which contains all sorts of helpful information for students and parents about program expectations and procedures, including the AYSP Attendance Policy. In the past, the policy for students in AYSP high school ensembles has*

allowed for no more than three unexcused absences per year; students in middle school ensembles have been allowed no more than four unexcused absences per year; and students in high school chamber ensembles have been allowed no more than one unexcused absence per semester. During the 2020-2021 season, given the necessity to strictly monitor student health and not to permit anyone to enter the AYSP building who cannot answer “no” to each and every question on the Daily Health Check Verification, and/or has a temperature at or above 100.4F, we will consider any absence for health reasons an “excused” absence. Students who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or are otherwise ill are expected to stay home, but must submit an absence notice through our website, so that we will know the student will be absent. Our students have not gathered to make music together for many months now, and we want all healthy students to take full advantage of every opportunity to participate in in-person rehearsals during the 2020-2021 season.