

Delaware County Youth Orchestra

Est. 1973

Year in Review • 2007-2008 Season

www.dcyo.org

36th Season

P.O. Box 143, Media, PA 19063

During the 36th season of the Delaware County Youth Orchestra, music director and conductor Brad Smith programmed music that inspired and challenged the orchestra members. From Brahms' beloved *Symphony No. 2* in the fall to Berlioz's exciting *Symphony Fantastique* in the spring, DCYO members responded to this challenging programming with outstanding musicianship.

Membership of the orchestra

The Delaware County Youth Orchestra is a highly selective, full-size symphony orchestra, comprised of 91 members during the 2007-2008 season. DCYO students come from a wider geographic area than the name implies: in 2007-2008, 53% came from Delaware County, 26% from Chester County, 18% from Montgomery County, and 1% from the state of Delaware. Approximately 90% of the members were high school students, the majority of whom were juniors and seniors, and 10% were in middle school. Approximately 75% attended public schools, 12% attended private schools, and 13% were schooled at home. During 2007-2008, male students comprised 40% of the orchestra members, female students 60%.

DCYO members tend to be high achievers, both musically and academically. Over one-third of our seniors graduating in June 2008 are going on to major in music, some at such schools as the Cleveland Institute, the Eastman School of Music, and Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music. Other June 2008 graduates are attending such highly selective schools as Columbia, Cornell, Johns Hopkins, Middlebury College, and Penn.

Conductor

Brad Smith was named Conductor and Music Director of the Delaware County Youth Orchestra at the beginning of the 2005-2006 season. Dr. Smith is also on the faculty of the Music Department at the University of Pennsylvania, where he conducts the Symphony Orchestra, the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble, and the Wind Ensemble. Prior to his appointment at Penn in 2003, he received graduate degrees in conducting from The University of Texas at Austin and taught music for four years in the Texas public schools.

Dr. Smith's primary research interests are in the areas of programming philosophy and contemporary repertoire. He presented on these topics at the inaugural meeting of the College Orchestra Directors Association, held in Cleveland, Ohio in 2004. Dr. Smith is active as a clinician and adjudicator and maintains memberships in the League of American Orchestras, College Orchestra Directors Association, College Band Directors National Association, College Music Society and the Conductors Guild. He and his wife Becki have two daughters, Emily and Heather.

2007-2008 concerts

Returning for his third concert season with DCYO, veteran conductor Brad Smith demonstrated his abilities as educator and a conductor. Each year our orchestra welcomes a large number of new students to many of its sections. These sections, though exceptionally talented, start relatively young and untested. Hard work and dedication of conductor and student musicians alike resulted in impressively strong fall concert performances. DCYO played to an enthusiastic audience for the season's opening concert on November 18 at Neumann College. This concert featured Brahms' *Symphony No. 2* as well as Berlioz's lively and lyrical *Roman Carnival Overture* and Liszt's grandiose *Les Préludes*. The fall concert program was repeated two weeks later on December 3 at Garnet Valley High School. This concert was also warmly received and a perfect close for the fall season. This young orchestra had set the stage for more spectacular performances in the coming spring season.

The major works presented for the spring 2008 concerts included Berlioz's ever-popular *Symphony Fantastique*, Copland's *El Salon Mexico*, and a short but lively piece by contemporary composer Dana Wilson titled *Shortcut Home*. This ambitious program was first presented on April 27 in an evening concert at Upper Darby Performing Arts Center. The concert program was repeated on May 4 in the evening at Radnor High School followed by a reception for parents and students. Both concerts, showcasing the talents of our student orchestra as well as many individual soloists, were met with great audience enthusiasm. Congratulations to all

of the dedicated DCYO musicians under the direction of Dr. Brad Smith.

Performance hours

The DCYO Performance Hour is a semi-annual event eagerly anticipated by the orchestra members. This program, featuring members of the orchestra as soloists and chamber musicians, gives the students a chance to perform in a friendly, intimate setting for their friends, family, and peers, and to socialize during the reception that follows the performance. These evenings allow the students to perform pieces that they have prepared outside of the orchestra rehearsal time. At times students perform on instruments other than the ones they play in DCYO; occasionally students present original works that they have written.

In December, we held the first-semester Performance Hour at the orchestra's regular rehearsal venue, the Newtown Square Presbyterian Church. Violinist Jennifer Campbell performed on piano. Violinists Sophie Fortunato, Rachyl Duffy (on viola) and Amy Semes performed violin solos accompanied by Klaus Volpert, father of cellist Peter Volpert. Violinist Charlotte Morris performed with her sister. Anu Somashekar and Rebecca Selin played violin-clarinet duos. Caitlin Mehrtens and Seth Kelly performed horn and harp duo; the orchestra's brass quintet played; and an unusual original work was performed by Charles Chen – using turntables.

The spring Performance Hour was held in May at the beautiful Fellowship Hall at the Swarthmore Presbyterian Church. The program featured violinists Amy Semes and Sophie Fortunato accompanied by Nozomi Takashima. Violinists Jennifer Campbell performed on piano and Rachyl Duffy on viola. Bassoonist Shelley Mohr performed a work by Pergolesi, accompanied by harpist Caitlin Mehrtens. Caitlin joined with harpist Cassie Cummings to play two harp duets by Carlos Salzedo. The orchestra's brass quintet performed an arrangement of "Jupiter" from Holst's *The Planets*, and cellist Yuki Koyama performed a Brahms piano quartet with his chamber group. This last work was a preview of the group's performance at the 2008 Tri-County Youth Festival Concert as first-place winners in the senior ensemble division of the Tri-County competition.

Camp Tockwogh rehearsal weekend

At the beginning of each season, DCYO schedules a weekend of intense rehearsals at Camp Tockwogh, a YMCA camp on the Chesapeake Bay. This annual mid-September retreat encourages camaraderie between new and returning members and provides a jump-start towards mastering the fall repertoire. **For the 2007/2008 concert season, this special program was sponsored in large part by a**

generous grant from the Ethel Sergeant Clark Smith Memorial fund.

Approximately 95% of our students were able to attend this program on the weekend of September 15-16, 2007. The weekend consisted of several intensive rehearsals interspersed with ample time for lively camaraderie. This was an opportunity to assess the strengths and weaknesses of a remarkable group of talented young musicians, which included many newcomers. Conductor Brad Smith again demonstrated his superb abilities as educator and mentor as well as conductor, and the students responded enthusiastically. During these rehearsals visitors and passersby were treated to strains of Brahms' beloved *Symphony No. 2*, as well as Berlioz's lively *Roman Carnival Overture* and Liszt's dramatic *Les Préludes*. During their free time students found no shortage of activities, including archery, rock-wall climbing, and ultimate Frisbee. Although the bay conditions were too choppy for water sports, many students found the beach to be a great location to simply relax or to play beach volleyball. Nearly perfect, mild late summer weather made for a most pleasurable weekend. The evening beachfront bonfire under starry skies was one of many highlights. As always, the retreat was a great success, stimulating the orchestra to develop as an ensemble both musically and socially.

Sectional rehearsals

As has been the tradition, the Delaware County Youth Orchestra held its sectionals twice during the 2007-2008 season, once in the fall and once in the spring. These rehearsals split the orchestra into brass, percussion, woodwinds, and the individual string sections. Professionals are invited in to work with each section on their particular technical challenges and musical nuances. After this evening of specialized work, the orchestra comes together stronger than before – and with a better understanding of the works that are being studied.

The musicians that DCYO invites come from the many wonderful professional orchestras in Philadelphia. They perform in the Philadelphia Opera Orchestra, the Pennsylvania Ballet Orchestra, and the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, among others, and have even included some alumni. Our coaches this year have included Kathy and Russell Mehrtens on brass; Bill Wozniak on percussion; Adeline Tomasone and Ted Pasternak on woodwinds; Barbara Sonies, Evelyn Luise, Carol Briselli, Deborah Reeder, Anne Peterson, Lesa Bubak for our strings. Our students greatly appreciate the time working with these fine musicians and grow musically from each sectional.

Members' activities and accomplishments

During the 2007-2008 season, DCYO members achieved significant musical honors. Although only

about one-half of the orchestra members take part in district, regional, and state orchestra and band festivals, twelve members won seats in the 2008 Pennsylvania Music Educators Association All-State Honors Orchestra, and one member from Delaware won a seat in Delaware's All-State Orchestra. DCYO is proud to say that one of its cellists won the seat of principal cello in the PMEA All-State Orchestra. In addition, several DCYO members won seats as principals in district and regional orchestras and bands.

DCYO members distinguished themselves in several young musicians competitions during the 2007-2008 season. A DCYO member won Honorable Mention in the 2008 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition. In local competitions, DCYO members were winners in several area concerto competitions during 2007-2008, including those sponsored by the Lansdowne Symphony, the Reading Symphony Orchestra, and the Warminster Symphony. In addition, members were winners in such young musicians competitions as the Tri-County Concerts Youth Festival and the West Chester University Piano Competition. Several members received significant scholarships at area chamber music programs, including Darlington Fine Arts Center, Settlement Music School, and Wilmington Music School. During the summer of 2008, some DCYO members participated in such highly selective summer music programs as the Aspen Music Festival, Boston University Tanglewood Institute, and the Pennsylvania Governor's School for the Arts. For further information, please see the appended list of "DCYO Distinguished Members, 2007-2008: Music Awards and Achievements."

DCYO June 2008 graduates include a National Merit Scholar and at least four more students recognized by the National Merit Scholarship Program. June graduates are going on to such highly selective schools as Columbia, Cornell, Johns Hopkins, and Penn. Over a third of the graduating seniors are majoring in music: they will be attending such schools as the Cleveland Institute, the Eastman School of Music, and Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music, among others. For further information, please see the enclosed list of "DCYO June 2008 Graduates."

Delaware Valley Young Musicians' Orchestra

The Delaware Valley Young Musicians' Orchestra (YMO) was established in 1989 as a less advanced version of the Delaware County Youth Orchestra. It performs a mixture of classical arrangements, contemporary music and popular music for full orchestra at a high-school level. Each year a number of players advance to the Delaware County

Youth Orchestra. New players and returning players audition for seating at the end of May. This full symphonic group consists of strings, harp, winds, percussion, and brass instruments. The YMO in 2007-08 had over 80 young players in grades 5-12. The average grade was 8.5, with ninth-graders making up the largest group. They came from 18 different school districts and 37 schools. Sixty private teachers were responsible for training these talented young people.

Two free concerts are prepared each year. In 2007-2008, both concerts were held at Neumann College's Life Center in Aston, Pa. For the fall 2007 concert, the Delaware Valley Young Musicians' Orchestra played works by Rimsky-Korsakoff, Holst, Beethoven, Meyer, Mozart, and the Beatles. In the spring the orchestra played music by Beethoven, Bizet, Haydn, Robert Smith, and five songs from movies by Henry Mancini.

This orchestra has two conductors that share rehearsal time, music selection, and auditions. Each week one of them rehearses half of the pieces. There are sectionals with special guest teachers and a split rehearsal for each half of the season. Mr. Scott Kiehner is an instrumental and general music teacher in Wallingford-Swarthmore School District. His primary instrument is horn. Mrs. Elizabeth Klinger is a string teacher in the Springfield School District. This past season she conducted half the program and presented a historical background for each piece that she conducted. The operating board of this orchestra consists of teachers, parents, and volunteers from the community. The YMO is sponsored under the corporate umbrella of DCYO. Barbara Ostroff, manager and founder of this group, is a string teacher in Springfield and is principal violist the Delaware County Symphony.

A look ahead to the 2008-2009 season

DCYO members have an exciting season to look forward to in 2008-2009. The fall repertoire will feature Dvorak's lushly melodic *Symphony No. 8*, as well as a suite from Prokofiev's witty and challenging music for the ballet *Romeo and Juliet*.

The spring semester will provide a special treat for the orchestra members and their audiences. Dr. Smith has programmed Jennifer Higdon's *Blue Cathedral* and arranged for Ms. Higdon to conduct a master class/rehearsal of the work during one of the regular spring rehearsals. With Higdon's *Blue Cathedral*, the students will be performing one of the most programmed orchestral works by a contemporary composer. (Ms. Higdon notes on her web site that "150 orchestras have performed the work since its 2000 premiere.") Although a complex and challenging twenty-first century composition, *Blue Cathedral* is also a most attractive and accessible work. In the words of San Francisco critic Norman Krieger, "Just a few of the reasons the work is attractive include its transparent orchestration, melodiousness and concision. Magical!"

Please visit jenniferhigdon.com for more information on this award-winning composer, who is also the recipient of an Endowed Chair in Compositional Studies at the Curtis Institute of Music.