

15 Years of OrchKids

When Marin Alsop joined the BSO in 2007, she wanted to create a music program that engaged with the diverse communities of Baltimore. She planned to build a program that offered equitable access to music, especially instrumental music, and used music as a vehicle for students to develop 21st century skills (creativity, collaboration, leadership, etc.) that would be transferable to all areas of their lives. With this vision, Marin Alsop (Music Director Laureate of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and OrchKids Founding Director) shaped OrchKids into the cornerstone of the BSO's community engagement efforts across the city.

OrchKids was founded a year later, in 2008, with 30 students at one elementary school with seed funding from Marin Alsop and Founding Donors Rheda Becker and Robert E. Meyerhoff. Over the years, OrchKids has been recognized on both national and local levels. This includes receiving the 2013 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award from former First Lady Michelle Obama, performing with the BSO during a Raven's half-time show as well as countless times at Joseph



The 2022 OrchKids Cross-Site Orchestra performing at the "Music in Full Bloom" concert at Highlandtown Elementary/Middle School #215.



Harriet Tubman Elementary School, the first OrchKids site!

Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, and features in multiple media outlets including PBS, the New York Times, 60 Minutes, and the Washington Post. OrchKids has served thousands of students in Baltimore, performed at countless venues across the city, and sent hundreds of students to prestigious summer music camps around the country.

In our 15th year, we are projected to serve 1,800 students at seven sites across the city. This year, we are excited to introduce a new framework for our after-school programs to provide deeper engagement for our students. This includes the introduction of private instruction, smaller group classes, and a greater emphasis on ensembles. Additionally, we will continue to provide service coordination to social services to help meet the needs of OrchKids students and families.

Follow OrchKids on Facebook and Instagram (@bsoorchkids) to stay up to date on all of the 15th year happenings at OrchKids!

Meet and Greet with Jonathon Heyward

Jonathon Heyward prioritized OrchKids before even starting his role as Music Director Designate at the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. He visited programming at Highlandtown Elementary/Middle School #215 and Mary Ann Winterling Elementary School before he was offered the position, and then hosted a meet and greet with OrchKids students the day after he was announced as Music Director Designate. Having grown up with access to music in a public school music program similar to OrchKids in South Carolina, Jonathon is able to connect with OrchKids students on a personal level and made it clear that his door is always open to each and every OrchKids student.



OrchKids students and staff with Jonathon Heyward and his wife Millie after the meet-and-greet.

During the meet and greet, Jonathon talked about what inspired him to become a conductor and confirmed that he still gets nervous when he conducts because “it’s part of being a musician.” He encouraged students to use those nerves for good rather than letting them control you and shared that he has a signed Suzuki book from Yo-Yo Ma! We are thrilled to have another Music Director that is committed to the students of OrchKids.

Summer at OrchKids

School was out for the summer, but OrchKids continued on! This year, we were thrilled to host our free summer program at Goucher College. Our summer program is a unique opportunity to bring students from all OrchKids sites across Baltimore together in a three week program. Instrumental students that attended the summer program received academic tutoring and book club, group lessons, enrichment class, breakfast and lunch, recess, ensemble sectionals, and ensemble rehearsals. We were also able to welcome our musicianship students (Pre-K through 3rd grade) back to summer programming for the first time since 2019. These students practiced songs, rhythms, and mindfulness, participated in violin and piano group lessons, and curbed summer learning loss with tutoring and arts integration.



In addition to regular programming, special events made Fridays extra fun. The first Fun Friday featured special guests BSO Artistic Partner Wordsmith, OrchKids Creative Partner John Tyler, and OrchKids Teaching Artist Rachel Winder leading a variety of creative workshops. The following Friday, students enjoyed popcorn and soda during a trip to the movies at The Senator Theatre. The final Fun Friday was one for the books. We kicked off the morning with an impressive talent show before getting ready for the main event - the summer concert! This concert showcased musicianship students, chamber music, a summer brass band, and wind and string ensembles. The audience was blown away by students’ musicianship and energy. Don’t miss the magic, check it out for yourself on the BSO OrchKids YouTube channel.

Musical Adventures

After months of practicing, filling out applications, private lessons, and auditioning, 40 students enjoyed a music-filled summer at an outside summer music camp. These students attended camps across the country including Interlochen Summer Arts Camp, Brevard Summer Institute and Festival, Camp Encore/Coda, Ithaca College's Summer Music Academy, multiple camps at the Peabody Institute, and more. Attending an outside summer music camp allows students to learn from new, renowned teachers, build connections with professionals, form new friendships, become more independent, and fully immerse themselves in music. But don't just take our word for it, check out what students said below!

"I loved Interlochen. I made loads of friends and met new people from around the world!"

- Kelly Quizhpi-Gomez, Harp
Interlochen Summer Arts Camp

Pictured with her cabin mates



"I learned some music theory, music literature, and played in a large orchestra and wind ensemble. It was one of the best experiences! Thank you OrchKids for giving me the opportunity to attend the Brevard Summer Music Institute and Festival!"

- Alexis Chavarria, Trumpet
Brevard Summer Music Institute and Festival

Pictured with the Beethoven statue near the Brevard Music Center



"I learned about the bass clef and how it works, how to sight read faster than usual, and the history of violin quartets!"

- Jeimy Valerio, Violin
Camp Encore/Coda

Pictured with fellow OrchKids student Alberta Quintinal-Flores and OrchKids Alumni Nema Robinson

