



Nova Scotia Youth Orchestra



A PROGRAM OF

**SYMPHONY NOVA SCOTIA**

# NOVA SCOTIA YOUTH ORCHESTRA 2023/24 IMPACT REPORT

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# INTRODUCTION

**For over 45 years, the Nova Scotia Youth Orchestra (NSYO) has provided students with educational opportunities not available at any university, public school, or conservatory in the province. The orchestra has been described by renowned professional conductors and musicians as one of the finest in Canada, and 85% of our nearly 1,000 alumni have gone on to jobs in music-related fields.**

In 2018, management of the NSYO was handed over to Symphony Nova Scotia. The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted our plans for growth, but we were excited to see the 2022/23 NSYO Season give 40 young musicians the

opportunity to network, volunteer, and advance their music training in person.

Symphony Nova Scotia and the NSYO provide a pathway to increased self-confidence, resilience, and a deep appreciation for music and the arts. Young musicians collaborate and create in a learning environment where fundamental skills like leadership, self-confidence, teamwork, and resilience are developed. We are committed to educating, encouraging, and empowering each young musician so they may pursue personal excellence both on and off the stage.

## NSYO TEAM



### **JACK CHEN** **GENERAL MANAGER**

Jack Chen is a professionally trained flautist with more than 20 years of experience who has shared the stage with such diverse artists as Bobby McFerrin, Amy Grant, and Sir James Galway. He has appeared in numerous PBS specials and toured with several EMI artists. With a tremendous love for chamber music, Jack performs regularly with Fifth Wind, a Halifax-based woodwind quintet. In addition to performing, Jack is an instructor at Acadia University and the Artistic Director of Inner Space Concerts, and he was Interim Principal Flute with Symphony Nova Scotia during the 2022/23 Season. Throughout the year, Jack actively recruits to strengthen the youth orchestra ranks. He visited 12 secondary schools in Kentville, Cambridge, Halifax, Truro, Bedford, Fall River, and Sydney over the season.



### **REBECCA ADAMS** **ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**

Rebecca Adams is a Canadian composer, originally from Prince Edward Island, and currently based in Halifax. She achieved a Bachelor of Music Composition at Dalhousie University in 2020 and a Graduate Certificate in Music Scoring for Screen and Stage from Sheridan College in 2021. She has written music for several media projects, including the short films *Romario* and *Dancing in the Cold*, and the indie games *Summit* and *Uprooted*. In 2023, she was invited to participate in the prestigious Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra's Composers Institute.



### **HOLLY MATHIESON** **MUSIC DIRECTOR**

Holly Mathieson is an award-winning conductor who has regularly worked with opera houses, ballet companies, and orchestras in Europe, Australasia, and North America. She joined Symphony Nova Scotia as Music Director in 2019. She frequently records for BBC Radio 3 and CBC, and her first major commercial recording with Decca, a collaboration with Isata Kanneh-Mason and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, reached #1 on the UK classical charts. Her work has seen her travel to nearly every continent and perform for audiences spanning from the British Royal Family and Europe's political elites to Scotland's homeless and refugee communities. She is an alumna of the Sasakawa Youth Leadership Fellowship, was a Taki Alsop Conducting Fellowship Prizewinner in 2013, and has a PhD in Music Iconography. In 2016, Zonta New Zealand named her one of New Zealand's Top 50 Women of Achievement.

# 2022/23 SEASON CONCERTS

All concerts held at St. Andrew's United Church, Halifax

## NSYO DANCE PARTY!

OCTOBER 15, 2022

Nearly 250 people attended the NSYO Dance Party under conductor Holly Mathieson, with guests the Maritime Bhangra Group. Works by Edvard Greig, Johann Strauss, Aaron Copland, Jacques Offenbach, Malkit Singh, and Jatinder Shah were performed to an enthusiastic audience, equally delighted by the Bhangra Group dancers. Designed to provide an immersive experience for the young musicians, this concert assisted their understanding of collaboration with community artists.



## ORCHESTRAL TRADITION: REVISITED

DECEMBER 3, 2022

Upwards of 300 family and friends attended the seasonal performance featuring works by Mozart, Verdi, Mary D. Watkins, Florence Price, Taylor MacGillivray, and Morton Lauridsen. Conducted by Greg Burton, this performance included traditional favourites as well as a new work from young Nova Scotia composer Taylor MacGillivray and lesser-known works by Florence Price. This concert was specifically curated with works from the classical canon to challenge the students' musical growth.



## ORCHESTRA IN MOTION

APRIL 30 & MAY 6, 2023

Directed by Louise Renault, former CBC Radio host, this concert brought the NSYO and Halifax Circus together to envision and create a new original program of music and spectacle. The creation process took upwards of four months, where the two organizations worked side-by-side to identify music to accompany circus feats, learn how to perform such in a synchronized presentation, and practice together collegially.

Lively and energetic compositions by Julius Fučík, Johann Strauss, Camille Saint-Saëns, and Dimitry Kabalevsky were performed and conducted by composer, arranger, and clinician Gary Ewer. While the NSYO played music, five young circus performers presented aerial, juggling, tightrope, and unicycle feats under the direction of Halifax Circus founder Mike Hirschbach. The performance also premiered a new work by composer Rebecca Adams, *Singing to the Skies*. The piece draws inspiration from the unique elements of collaboration between the NSYO and Halifax Circus during the orchestra's 2022/23 season.

With upwards of 440 in attendance, the concert was sold out. This collaboration provided a chance for NSYO musicians to work with other young performers, to learn from each other, and to discover first-hand that the creative process can be as important as the outcome. Orchestra in Motion was repeated in Truro on May 6 with the generous support of the Cobequid Arts Council.



# PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

The NSYO had a chance to perform with Symphony Nova Scotia musicians for a large audience at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium. This annual side-by-side concert provides the opportunity for NSYO musicians to learn alongside their

professional mentors and coaches from the Symphony. It also offers our young musicians a better understanding of performer-audience synergy and feedback.



## **SYMPHONY SIDE-BY-SIDE** **FEBRUARY 26, 2023**

NSYO musicians performed onstage at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium alongside their professional counterparts to an enthusiastic audience of more than 700 people, including upwards of 300 youth from community programs and schools who were invited – to witness in some cases their first orchestra performance – compliments of Symphony Nova Scotia.

The program celebrated diverse composers and guest artists, plus the premiere of a new film. *Moontides*, a new KV 265 Science & Symphony film by José Francisco Salgado, accompanied the original music score by Order of Canada recipient John Estacio. Other works featured in the program included Cris Derksen's *Round Dance*, Robert Schumann's *Genoveva Overture*, Elizabeth Maconchy's *Nocturne*, and William Grant Still's *Symphony No. 5, "Western Hemisphere"*. The program was conducted by Holly Mathieson and featured guest cellist Cris Derksen.

## **WELLNESS WORKSHOPS**

Symphony Nova Scotia was pleased to announce the launch of the new NSYO Wellness Program, a first of its kind in Atlantic Canada at the beginning of the 2022/23 Season. With an exceptional gift of \$90,000 over three years from the J&W Murphy Foundation, the Symphony has been able to offer its student musicians an integrated approach to healthy music-making.

"Playing an instrument can take a toll on your body, and performance anxiety for musicians isn't unusual," explains NSYO General Manager Jack Chen. "By helping our young musicians learn wellness techniques early, we hope they'll

master lifelong tools and strategies for managing stress and maintaining their mental, physical, and musical health in any high-performance environment."

A team of experts, notably a clinical performance psychologist, audiologist, injury-prevention chiropractor, and nutritionist made up the wellness team for 2022/23, providing upwards of 100 hours of care. Performance psychology sessions and regular workshops provided comprehensive training for musicians on a weekly basis, and healthy nutrition breaks were worked into rehearsals.

We are grateful for the guidance and participation of Dr. Christine Carter, Dr. Marshall Chasin, Dr. Alan Schneider, Melissa Allen, Rebecca Thomas, Carolyn Christie, Dr. Amber Johnston, and the National Youth Orchestra of Canada, as well as Symphony Nova Scotia musicians who met one-on-one as needed.



# LEADERSHIP, SELF-CONFIDENCE, TEAMWORK, & RESILIENCE TRAINING

## WELLNESS RETREAT

After Hurricane Fiona forced a cancellation of the planned three-day retreat in September 2022 – an event that usually kicks off the season – it was rescheduled to May 2023 to conclude a successful season. This intensive and immersive experience is expected to hone musical skills and technique as well as build section collaboration and friendships. Held at Ross Creek Centre for the Arts, it was the culmination of 140 hours of rehearsal over the season, four audience-attended concerts, and one fundraising marathon.

## COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

On October 15, NSYO musicians participated in a “flash mob” organized in the farmer’s market of Alderney Landing in Dartmouth. Spread around market stalls selling soap, baked goods, savoury treats, and local brews, individual musicians played in time to conductor Holly Mathieson as she conducted them from the podium. Maritime Bhangra Group also joined them. Market vendors were happy for the students’ performance, which stopped upwards of 150 shoppers that early Saturday morning who listened attentively and applauded enthusiastically.

We were also thrilled that a recorded work by the NSYO was part of Holly Carr’s *Light in the Forest* exhibition at Halifax’s Museum of Natural History in May 2023. This 45-minute multimedia immersive experience was filled with messages of hope and resilience and featured an original score from the Symphony’s own bassoonist and composer L. Christopher Palmer.

## ADDITIONAL LEARNING

Masterclasses were also organised to provide professional instruction for NSYO musicians. They benefited from the guidance and advice of artists including former Symphony Nova Scotia Concertmaster and current Edmonton Symphony Orchestra Concertmaster Robert Uchida; Toronto Symphony Orchestra cellist Joseph Johnson; and Symphony Nova Scotia Community Ambassador and Artist in Residence Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser.

Symphony Nova Scotia musicians who actively supported the NSYO during the season included: Renaud Lapierre, Mark Lee, Jennifer Jones, Celeste Jankowski, Isabel Fournier, Susan Sayle, Yvonne DeRoller, Étienne Chénard, Rachel Desoer, Hilary Brown, Max Kasper, Jemma Jones, Christine Feierabend, Danielle Johannes, Eileen Walsh, Tim Yung, Christopher Palmer, Gabe Azzie, Mary Lee, Curtis Dietz, and Michael Baker.

## BLUE NOSE CHARITY CHALLENGE

Hearing, making, and feeling live music helps us discover so much about ourselves and the world around us. Since 2018, the Symphony Striders team has participated in the Blue Nose Marathon Charity Challenge to raise funds for youth education and the NSYO. This year, the team of 32 walked and/or ran the 5K, 10K, half- and full-marathon routes over the May long weekend. Headed up by co-captains Max Morrison and Noam Koubi-Bahar, these young NSYO musicians encouraged and supported efforts that raised more than \$20,000 with the support of team sponsor Domus Realty. In addition, Max and a few of the NSYO musicians also learned new skills when they agreed to create a promotion video for Giving Tuesday, which included filming, editing, and script writing.



# BURSARIES & AWARDS

Breaking down financial barriers to make it possible for youth from all backgrounds to benefit from the wide variety of programming offered by the NSYO is accomplished annually through bursaries. In 2022/23, we were able to maintain a reduced tuition fee and provided two youths with complimentary full tuitions. We are grateful to the Chebucto Symphony Award that supports this activity.



In 2022/23 the following young musicians were recognized:

- **Noam Koubi-Bahar** received the Moragh Parks Award, given to a dedicated member of the orchestra who is graduating from secondary school and plans on pursuing a degree in music.
- **Kaitlyn Canning** received the Gunnhilder Baldursson Award, given to the orchestra member who exemplifies team spirit.
- **Nyx Matheson** was named Rookie of the Year for showing some great bravery in her half rookie season.
- **James Rankin** was named Most Valuable Player for holding up the cello section on his own.
- **Aurelia Mitchell** was named Most Dedicated Player for her solid commitment to the NSYO, commuting weekly from Amherst, NS.
- **Simone Smith** was named Most Important Player for giving us some of the most beautiful A's for tuning notes every single rehearsal and concert and making amazing progress in the last year.
- **Max Morrison** was named Most Passionate Player for all his contributions to the NSYO over the years, including playing the bass when we didn't have any and stepping up to captain the Blue Nose Symphony Striders again and again.

Others noted for their contribution included: Indi Tisoy, Xinghao Li, Mattingly Lunn, Lydia Macdonald, Aneka Dunnewold, Tal Koubi, Ella Hanson, Kaisa Morrison, Sydney Klenavic, Gaia Kupitman, and Aniqā Jalal.

## THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Upwards of 200 individual donors have supported NSYO with gifts this season! We value your generosity in creating important and enriching opportunities for youth across our province. We're also pleased to recognize the significant contributions of the following supporters:

- **Symphony Nova Scotia Foundation**
- **J&W Murphy Foundation**
- **A. Mary Holmes Trust**
- **The River Philip Foundation**
- **Women for Music**
- **Domus Realty**
- **Marigold Cultural Centre**
- **The Cobequid Arts Council**
- **Chebucto Orchestral Society of Nova Scotia**
- **Patterson Law**

We would also like to acknowledge that NSYO programming takes place in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.

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