



*A Mosaic of Members and Music,  
Where All Musicians  
Learn, Grow and Lead*

*39th Season  
2021-2022*

# **THE SOUTH HILLS JUNIOR ORCHESTRA**

**P. O. Box 12642  
Pittsburgh, PA 15241**

**[www.shjo.org](http://www.shjo.org)**

## **MEMBER HANDBOOK**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The South Hills Junior Orchestra (SHJO) was established in 1983 as a community orchestra experience to cultivate and support the arts in schools and the community at large. The Orchestra draws musicians from many municipalities in the greater Pittsburgh Area and is open to players of all ages, from eight through adult. We are grateful for the generosity of the Upper St. Clair School District, which donates rehearsal space, performance arenas, and the use of percussion, keyboard instruments, and music stands. Most performances are held in the Upper St. Clair High School Theater. All performances are free and open to the public and all staff members volunteer their time and talent to sustain the continuing legacy of a place where members learn, grow and lead.

### **OUR VISION**

Music is a life skill and should be accessible to all. Engagement in musical activity is a life-long learning opportunity. SHJO enables members to pursue collaborative creative expression and discover their own musical potential, regardless of age.

### **OUR MISSION**

The mission of South Hills Junior Orchestra is to support and nurture an orchestral music education in local school band and orchestra programs and the community at large, while developing knowledge and understanding, increasing performance skills, cultivating an appreciation for music, nurturing individual member's self-esteem and self-motivation, and advancing a life-long study of music.

### **OUR PHILOSOPHY**

SHJO was founded to nurture the joy of music making in a non-competitive orchestral setting. The orchestra creates an environment that fosters learning and growth. As members discover their confidence, they are encouraged to compete only with themselves, to be better tomorrow than they were today, and to lead each other to greater success.

## ABOUT THE SHJO EXPERIENCE

The focus at SHJO is about learning, growing, and leading. Many members achieve positions of leadership to serve fellow musicians. The orchestra performs in the Fall and Spring. Musicians interested in South Hills Junior Orchestra are afforded the opportunity to participate in several open rehearsals before committing to membership. The Upper St. Clair School District has provided a permanent rehearsal home for the orchestra, which has performed more than 160 concerts at Upper St. Clair and in more than 20 cities in the northeastern United States and Canada. The recommended entrance prerequisite is at least two years of school instruction or one year of private lessons. The average tenure of SHJO members is between four and eight years, and no musician has ever been turned away. Every member receives a music folder for home practice. Many alumni of South Hills Junior Orchestra have established promising careers in music, while others have sustained their love for music-making as they have pursued and achieved careers in many other professions. Membership in SHJO is a wholesome family activity, and is based on volunteering and modeling the joy of music-making as a service to the community-at-large. Participation in SHJO experience is a life-long learning opportunity. Since the concept of volunteering is a central pillar of the SHJO experience, everyone is a volunteer. The directors, musicians, and boosters all donate their time and talents to maintain a non-competitive musical experience, where everyone participates for the joy of orchestral music-making. Throughout the history of the orchestra, contributions exceeding \$30,000 have been made to charitable organizations, including the Upper St. Clair School District. The orchestra does not charge tuition for membership, but does ask members to pay a music donation fee to cover the expense of acquiring sheet music. This fee also includes membership in the booster group that provides support for additional activities.

## BOOSTER ORGANIZATION

The South Hills Junior Orchestra Booster Organization is an incorporated, 501(c)3 non-profit organization, staffed by parents and friends of the orchestra on a volunteer basis. These volunteers provide financial support to the orchestra by fundraising for music scholarships and social activities, subsidizing trips, and contributing gifts to thank the Upper St. Clair School District for hosting us. Over the years, the Orchestra and the Boosters have made significant contributions to the school and community-at-large. The Booster volunteers sponsor and chaperone SHJO social events, hold receptions after the Fall and Winter Concerts, plan the SHJO Family Banquet after the May Concert, and provide snacks during rehearsal breaks and between dress rehearsals and the concert.

## MEMBER GUIDELINES

Membership is open to those who play orchestral instruments.

Potential new members are welcome to attend three “open” rehearsals to determine if SHJO is the place for them. An entrance audition is not required. School-age members must submit registration forms with parent/guardian signatures. Any person over the age of 18 who plays in the group must submit a registration form and is also required to submit copies of current Child Abuse Clearances and Criminal Record Checks, dated no earlier than January 1, 2020. All chaperones must also submit clearances. Adult members who maintain continuous membership need not resubmit clearances each year. Every member should manage their personal calendar and make attendance at SHJO a top priority.

## MUSIC DONATION/REGISTRATION

SHJO requests a music donation from members and requires that all members complete a Registration Form.

Membership for a complete year (from September through June)	\$225.00*
Membership for a complete year for additional family member	\$210.00*
Membership for all one semester members (September to December or January to May)	\$200.00*

Financial assistance can be arranged. Please speak to a Director. All requests will remain confidential.

\* Fees will be reduced during the first year back from pandemic sequestering.

## ATTENDANCE

South Hills Junior Orchestra is a place where members *Learn, Grow, and Lead*. Membership is a unique opportunity for musicians to join with those with a common interest in musical expression. The resulting musical collaboration is only effective when all members contribute their role at every rehearsal. Any member's absence diminishes the progress of the entire group to the common goal of quality performance. Please plan to attend every rehearsal.

Attendance is strictly monitored. Personal illness, death in the family, and inclement weather are valid reasons for missing a rehearsal. In addition, school academic or school music program obligations and serious family issues or religious commitments will be honored as excused absences from rehearsal, with advance communication of the anticipated absence made to [mdirector@shjo.org](mailto:mdirector@shjo.org), and with a subsequent hand-written excuse upon return to the next rehearsal. Tardiness and early-exits from rehearsal will be noted in the attendance file. For reasons of safety and the welfare of all members, identification badges are provided and will be worn by all members while participating in rehearsals. These will be picked up before rehearsal and returned to the registration table before departure from each rehearsal.

At the discretion of the Directors, any member may be asked to demonstrate their personal preparedness, particularly if their attendance record is inconsistent, regardless of the reasons. Appointments are available for requesting help on difficult passages and for "preparedness demonstrations" before rehearsals. See a Director to request help. The privilege of membership may be temporarily suspended for failure to meet minimum expectations of musical growth, practice, an uncooperative attitude, or irregular attendance.

Attendance at Dress Rehearsal on the day of the concert is required. Dress rehearsal is closed to the public. Members should arrive for dress rehearsal in their concert attire as changing areas are not provided. A pre-concert snack will be provided between the dress rehearsal and the concert.

## GENERAL BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES

SHJO has enjoyed more than 35 years at Upper St. Clair High School serving as a community resource that has been officially approved by the Upper St. Clair School Board for the use of school facilities and some school equipment. This privilege comes with the caveat that South Hills Junior Orchestra members will conduct themselves appropriately and behave as though they are members of the student body of the High School. Therefore, in addition to the guidelines in this SHJO handbook, all members are expected to read the Upper St. Clair High School Handbook which can be found at <https://www.uscsd.k12.pa.us/cms/lib/PA01000033/Centricity/Domain/19/21-22USCHShandbook.pdf>. Expectations regarding a variety of behavioral situations can be found throughout this document, and in some cases may be similar to the handbook in your own school.

## REHEARSAL EXPECTATIONS

- Strong commitment to rehearsal attendance is the most important responsibility of membership.
- Registration guarantees that every member is entitled to have a folder for home practice.
- All members are expected to be in their seat and ready to play by 10:25.
- A break will be given during rehearsals for social and refreshment reasons.
- All members are expected to have their instrument in good working order.
- A pencil should be kept in the folder for use during rehearsal.
- Since all music is "rented" from the SHJO library, only pencil should be used to make notations.
- It is expected that all members will practice their music and be prepared to demonstrate their parts to the best of their ability, when asked.
- Consider SHJO to be a *hand-held electronic device-free zone!* During attendance at SHJO rehearsals, breaks, and events, electronic devices are to be off and out-of-sight.
- Attendance at dress rehearsal on the day of the concert is required.
- Members should arrive for dress rehearsal in their concert attire as changing areas are not provided.
- The Booster Group will provide a healthy pre-concert snack between the dress rehearsal and the concert.
- Guidelines for concert attire are outlined in this handbook and must be strictly followed.
- Cummerbunds and bow ties may be ordered up to one month prior to performances.
- Review the Concert Protocols page in advance of concert month in case clothing orders must be replaced due to growth.
- Special concerns should be brought to the attention of the Directors.

## COMMUNICATIONS

SHJO communicates with members by telephone, cellphone, text messages, e-mail, Facebook, and on our website [www.shjo.org](http://www.shjo.org). This Handbook is an educational communication resource for members. In the event that rehearsal must be cancelled due to weather conditions, notification will be available on WTAE, the SHJO website, by mass e-mail and mass texts to members.

## ENSEMBLES

SHJO also sponsors small ensemble opportunities for its members. These groups typically meet at 9:00 and rehearse for one hour. Membership in the ensembles is voluntary. Groups might include String Ensemble, Woodwind Ensemble, Brass Ensemble, and Percussion Ensemble when staff members are available to conduct these groups. They generally perform at the fall and spring concerts and in the community-at-large.

Ensemble opportunities for boosters and family members may also be offered. The only entrance requirements for such an ensemble is an interest to make music and have fun doing it!

## ACTIVITIES

In addition to rehearsing and performing music, members of SHJO and their families are invited to participate in other activities sponsored by the group. Boosters set up a snack table for the members at the break in rehearsal and create a pre-concert snack between the dress rehearsal and concert. They also hold receptions with appetizers and desserts following the concerts. In the spring, immediately following the concert, the entire "SHJO Family" dines at a banquet in the High School Nutrition Center. The Boosters also create a *Spirits of the Symphony Haunted House* with the fall pizza party and in the spring they invite members and their families to enjoy a Family Game Night and Ice Cream Social. Other social events are scheduled from time-to-time.

In addition, giving back is a strong pillar of the SHJO experience. Every five years, the orchestra makes a significant contribution to the Upper St. Clair School District for giving SHJO a home and for generously donating rehearsal and performance space, as well as use of keyboard and percussion instruments. Some of those gifts have included Clavinova keyboards, conductor podiums, music stands, music library storage cabinets, as well as contributions toward the purchase of the acoustic shell in the Theater and the Steinway concert grand piano. The Boosters run a Patron Drive every year to defray operating expenses for the orchestra. Ad space can also be purchased for inclusion in concert programs. Through the years, SHJO members have also contributed to worthy causes, including Make-a-Wish, The Literacy Counsel, Little Kids Rock, Sarah's Garden, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and many others. The members of the orchestra hold a "penny wars" competition between sections each year and raise money to give to a charity of their choice.

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The primary funding for SHJO is the music donation fee that is collected during registration for membership. These fees pay for music and supplies to support the members. Secondary funding is provided by the SHJO Booster Organization. The Boosters run an annual Patron Drive. In addition, advertising can be purchased from the Boosters for publication in concert programs. Periodically the Boosters will hold fundraising campaigns to help members earn funds for trips.

## CONCERT PROTOCOLS

The most obvious goal of membership in an orchestra is performance. It is expected that all members will perform at all scheduled concerts. The orchestra performs in the Upper St. Clair High School Theater on a Sunday afternoon in the months of November and May. An annual December performance is scheduled as a charity fund raiser, where members of the orchestra serve as guest conductors. The location varies, so it will be announced, and the designated charity will be chosen by a vote of the membership of the orchestra. Additional concerts may be scheduled in other locations as invitations to perform are received.

As a member of a music group or “team,” you are expected to wear the official uniform. While members are welcome to express their own fashion statements (which must be tasteful and appropriate) at rehearsals, all members are expected to comply 100% with the SHJO concert dress protocol, which will be confirmed before each performance.

Most performance events will be formal, and members are asked to strictly comply with the dress policy. Occasionally, alternate informal attire will be used, particularly for outdoor concerts. See the Concert Protocols page for specific regulations.

Members should be aware that when they are on stage, they are there to perform. Talking, gesturing, or any behavior that is distracting or disruptive will not be acceptable and could result in suspension from the orchestra. Electronic devices are strictly prohibited on stage.

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Everyone must be aware that both formal and informal photographs will be taken at SHJO rehearsals and events for use in publicity and on the SHJO website. Members who do not wish to be photographed must opt-out in writing. Special concerns should be brought to the attention of the Directors.

## CONCERT ATTIRE

Guidelines for concert attire are strictly outlined and must be followed. Cummerbunds and bow ties may be ordered up to one month prior to performances.

**FORMAL CONCERTS:** Male members should wear black dress trousers, with a white tuxedo style, long-sleeved dress shirt with a collar, black dress shoes with high black socks and the SHJO royal blue cummerbund and bow tie.

Females members should wear long black dress skirts that are A-line or full, and that touch the floor, with a white tuxedo style, long-sleeved blouse with a collar, black dress shoes with nude hosiery and the SHJO royal blue cummerbund and bow tie. Female cellists/percussionists may wear dress trousers with wide legs

All members should have their hair pulled back neatly. Any hair jewelry should be neutral. Shiny distracting items that are gold, silver or glittery should be avoided. Hats and headbands are not permitted on stage. Jeans, cargo pants, pencil skirts, leggings, spandex, shiny fabrics, such as taffeta, satin, velveteen and sequins should be avoided as should skirts with slits. Shirts must be pure white and not beige, and undergarments must be white, as colors show through white shirts under stage lighting. Dress shoes must be black. Athletic shoes are not acceptable. Females should wear closed toe shoes.

**INFORMAL CONCERTS:** All members should wear the SHJO white polo shirt with the same skirts or trousers, and the same shoes and socks they wear for formal concerts. Sunglasses may be worn for outdoor concerts.



## TRIPS

The Orchestra has traveled to many cities to perform. Trips include at least two performances, often in historic places, including the White House, the Henry Ford Museum, Faneuil Hall in the Quincy Market in Boston, the Town Green in Mystic, Connecticut, on the Ohio River stern-wheeler The Belle of Louisville, Nathan Phillips Square in Toronto, Canada, Mt. Vernon, the Jefferson and Lincoln Memorials, the Pennsylvania State Capitol, Gettysburg, Baltimore's Inner Harbor, and many others. Concerts are also presented in senior citizen facilities as a part of the orchestra's goal to serve the community-at-large. Tours of historic sites and museums are included in the itinerary to provide educational enrichment. The final stop on all trips is an amusement park. Trips are arranged by the staff with assistance from the Boosters and may be local or at a distance. Members pay their way and the Boosters offer fundraising opportunities to assist members. All of the trips have been special events for Chaperones, Directors and Members.

## VOLUNTEERING

Everyone at SHJO is a volunteer. All staff members, players and boosters give freely of their time and talent to create a unique experience for the joy of music making. Booster volunteers are the foundation of support and bring their unique skills and talents to promote and support the vision and mission of the entire enterprise.

## ADVICE ON HOME PRACTICE

- To "practice or not to practice" can be a life changing decision!
- Naturally self-motivated musicians are rare.
- Success is the strongest motivator for practice.
- Schedule your personal practice and track it on a calendar.
- Plan ahead for practice by keeping a journal.
- Set goals! Goals must be written and measurable. "I will practice more" is not specific. "I will practice 30 minutes daily" is specific and measurable.
- Practice in a place that is quiet and away from other family activities.
- Have a dedicated procedure for personal practice; set up the stand, tune the instrument, practice warm-ups and scales, work on etudes, pieces-sonatas and concerti, orchestra music and be sure to rotate the order of the work.
- If a day or two of personal home practice is missed, start back with selections that were formerly successful achievements, and ease into the new learning.
- Practice techniques might include "chunking" where a troublesome passage is isolated for improvement, add-ons, "backwards practice," using varied articulations and fingerings, "ten times right," "penny practice," three different tempos a day - overlapping and increasing the metronome marking, and other tips you learn from your teachers and fellow musicians.
- Five minutes of experience on the instrument on an extremely busy day is a better idea than skipping a day.
- There is no substitute for slow practice.
- Always remember, your hands have a small part in music making, because it is your brain that dictates the actions of your hands.
- Seek instruction from a private teacher to increase personal motivation. Studio teachers are role models of the art of playing and can move you ahead further and faster. They teach you how to think like a musician.
- Practice is a personal and private opportunity to solve problems, build endurance and achieve a sense of well-being and self-confidence that motivates you to continuously stretch yourself to higher levels of achievement.

## **SOUTH HILLS JUNIOR ORCHESTRA MUSIC STAFF**

### **PAUL K. FOX - Artistic Director/Co-Founder**

Paul Fox earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Music and a Master of Fine Arts in Music Education from Carnegie-Mellon University. He taught Orchestra and Chorus in the Upper St. Clair Schools for 35 years. He is a member of American String Teachers Association (ASTA), National School Orchestra Association, National Association for Music (NAfME), and Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA). He currently holds positions as PMEA State Retired Member Coordinator, Chair of the PMEA State Council for Teacher Training, Recruitment, and Retention, Member of the Steering Committee for UPPER ST. CLAIR TODAY Magazine, and Trustee of the Community Foundation of Upper St. Clair, where he also serves as Director of Communications. Paul is also an active presenter of webinars and clinics for the NAfME and PMEA on such subjects as “Retiring as a Music Educator,” “Marketing Your Professionalism as a Music Educator,” “Ethics for Music Educators,” and “Supercharging Your School Musical.”

### **DONNA S. FOX - Executive Director/Co-Founder**

Donna Stark Fox earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Music and a Master of Fine Arts in Music from Carnegie-Mellon University with a major in violin and certification in music education. She was the Orchestra Director for the Peters Township Schools for 38 years. She has served as President and Editor for the Pennsylvania-Delaware String Teachers Association, and was both State and National Chair for the Tri-M Music Honor Society. In addition, she is a member of the American String Teachers Association (ASTA), Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA), and National Association for Music Education (NAfME). She has also served as a Supervisor of Student Teachers in Music Education for Seton Hill University and is currently an administrator for High Note Music Festivals, where she also adjudicates orchestras and bands. In addition, to her work as Executive Director of SHJO, Donna teaches violin, viola, and cello privately and also works as the Business Manager for the Community Foundation of Upper St. Clair.

### **JANET VUKOTICH - Managing Director**

Janet Vukotich became involved with the SHJO in 1991 when her son, Chaz, joined the cello section. As a parent volunteer, she served on trip committees, worked on concert attire, and was the booster organization treasurer before becoming booster president. After Chaz left for college in 1999, she volunteered to be the music librarian and then stepped into the managing director position. Janet is a Chemical Engineer with a Bachelor’s degree from Carnegie Mellon University and a Master’s degree in Education Technology Management, also from Carnegie Mellon. She worked for more than 33 years at Westinghouse in the process control area. Janet is married to Chuck Vukotich, who volunteers to drive the SHJO truck for trips and moving instruments, as required.

### **CHAZ VUKOTICH - Logistics Coordinator**

Chaz Vukotich joined SHJO in 1991, playing the cello for seven seasons until he graduated from high school in 1999, moving from the back of the section to be the section leader during his last two years. He returned to the orchestra as an adult volunteer in 2006, helping with logistics and heavy lifting. Chaz has a Bachelor’s degree in Bio-medical Engineering from Northwestern University and is certified to teach math, physics and biology in the public schools. He is a teacher at St. Joseph’s High School in Natrona Heights. Chaz married Alexis Papalia in 2014, whom he met through friends that he had made in SHJO.



