

# Youth Orchestra of Central Jersey and Princeton Symphony Orchestra Announce New Partnership

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originally published: 08/11/2020



(PRINCETON, NJ) -- The **Youth Orchestra of Central Jersey (YOCJ)** and the **Princeton Symphony Orchestra (PSO)** have announced a **new partnership** to advance excellence in orchestral performance and foster a greater connection between Central Jersey's young musicians and their professional counterparts. Integral to the partnership, the PSO is expanding its assistant conductor position to include leadership of the youth orchestra's Symphonic Orchestra. YOCJ's beloved Symphonic Director **John Enz** is retiring after 35 years and the current PSO assistant conductor, **Nell Flanders**, will take over the baton with immediate effect. The partnership is the formalization of an ongoing

relationship established through the PSO's BRAVO! Education Program which encourages young musicians and their families to be exposed to extensive performance repertoire and be inspired by professional artists.

The two organizations have much in common beyond missions espousing excellence in music. The Youth Orchestra of Central Jersey was founded by the late **Portia Sonnenfeld** in 1978 and was first known as the String Preparatory Orchestra. In 1980, Ms. Sonnenfeld then founded The Little Orchestra of Princeton, which evolved into the present-day Princeton Symphony Orchestra. Beyond the YOCJ, **John Enz** was a cellist with the PSO for over 30 years.

“Our youth are our future” says **PSO Executive Director Marc Uys**. “I am thrilled to come together with YOCJ and to be able to share the PSO's artistic resources with the next generation of musicians. Expanding our assistant conductor position to include this role is a significant growth opportunity for us. I know that Ms. Flanders' passion for working with young musicians will lead the way in bringing these two organizations even closer together.”

In addition to the direction of Nell Flanders, YOCJ students will benefit from workshops and sectional rehearsals with PSO musicians, as well as special access to PSO concerts with an opportunity to meet and greet guest artists. During the fall of 2020, the two organizations will explore ways to keep students active through online instruction and engagement.

YOCJ Executive Director **Larisa Epps** says, “YOCJ would not be where it is now, if it weren't for our Artistic Director **John Enz**. There are over three decades of students whose lives have been significantly impacted by John's passion for music and his nurturing of the next generation. It is John's dream that YOCJ fosters this unique relationship with PSO in order to continue on the trajectory of musical excellence for young musicians.”

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**John Enz'** dual role as YOCJ Artistic Director and Symphonic Conductor will be divided. **Nell Flanders** will take on the post of YOCJ Symphonic Conductor and YOCJ's long time Assistant Artistic Director **Phillip Pugh** will take over the helm of the organization as the new YOCJ Artistic Director. Mr. Pugh has been instrumental in numerous logistical aspects of the organization for the last 32 years, as well as conductor for the String Preparatory Orchestra and Pro Arte Orchestra.

Commenting on the partnership, **Mr. Pugh** says, "We are so excited to begin this partnership with the Princeton

Symphony Orchestra. Over the past few years, we have been fortunate to have **Nell Flanders** and several PSO musicians teach and work with our students. As educators, we always want our students to strive for high standards and see where they are heading in the future. Partnering with a professional orchestra of the PSO's caliber certainly will inspire and motivate our students to aim high."

### **About John Enz**

John Enz holds a master's degree in cello performance and music education from Temple University. After completing his undergraduate studies at Goshen College with further studies at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and at Interlochen Center for the Arts, Mr. Enz spent two years working with the music students of Ecole St. Trinité and the Haitian Orchestra in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. He toured with this group on the East Coast and to Tanglewood Music Camp. Mr. Enz began his long association with the West Windsor-Plainsboro School District in 1977 when he took over and nurtured a fledgling string program at Dutch Neck School, continued at Community Middle School and moved to High School North where he taught orchestra and strings before retiring in June 2018. Mr. Enz was also a cellist with the Princeton Symphony Orchestra for over 30 years and taught at Albemarle Music Camp. Mr. Enz began his association with the Youth Orchestra of Central Jersey in 1985, when it was known as the String Preparatory Orchestra. He worked closely with founder Portia Sonnenfeld and took over the helm of the growing youth orchestra, upon her passing in 1987. During his 35 years as artistic director and Symphonic Orchestra conductor, he has been the driving force behind the extensive offerings of YOCJ. The program now includes 12 performing ensembles, led by 9 conductors. YOCJ has toured and performed in Boston, Toronto, Vienna, Prague, Austria's Esterhazy Palace, Leipzig, and Berlin. Mr. Enz has conducted the Symphonic Orchestra, featuring concerto performances by prominent musicians such as the Philadelphia Orchestra concertmaster David Kim, principal hornist Jennifer Montone, assistant principal cellist Yumi Kendall, assistant principal timpanist Angela Zator Nelson, and the New York Philharmonic former principal clarinetist Stanley Drucker.

## **About Nell Flanders**

Nell Flanders brings her varied experiences as a professional conductor, violinist, and educator to her work as assistant conductor of the Princeton Symphony Orchestra, with whom she has conducted ballet, popular classics, and holiday concerts. Ms. Flanders is deeply committed to educating the next generation of musicians and music lovers. She currently conducts the Precollege

Symphony Orchestra at the Manhattan School of Music, where she also teaches conducting and violin. Previous positions include directing the Symphonic Wind Ensemble at The Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College and teaching at the University of Maryland – Baltimore County, Utah State University, and the University of Chicago. Her passion for cross-cultural exchange has led to frequent trips to Panama to conduct and teach. Ms. Flanders enjoys performing many styles of music including blues, tango, period instrument baroque, and contemporary, and she is committed to broadening the range of musical styles played in an orchestral setting. Ms. Flanders recently completed a doctoral degree in orchestral conducting as a student of Marin Alsop at the Peabody Conservatory. She also holds degrees from the Oberlin Conservatory and Mannes College – The New School.



## **ABOUT THE PRINCETON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

The **Princeton Symphony Orchestra** (PSO) is a cultural centerpiece of the Princeton community and one of New Jersey's finest music organizations, a position established through performances of beloved masterworks, innovative music by living composers, and an extensive network of educational programs offered to area students free of charge. Led by Edward T. Cone Music Director Rossen Milanov, the PSO presents orchestral, pops, and chamber music programs



of the highest artistic quality, supported by lectures and related events that supplement the concert experience. Through PSO BRAVO!, the orchestra produces wide-reaching and impactful education programs in partnership with local schools and arts organizations that culminate in students attending a live orchestral performance. The PSO receives considerable support from the Princeton community and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, regularly garnering NJSCA's highest honor. Recognition of engaging residencies and concerts has come from the National Endowment for the Arts, and the PSO's commitment to new music has been acknowledged with an ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming and a Copland Fund Award. The only independent, professional orchestra to make its home in Princeton, the PSO performs at historic Richardson Auditorium on the campus of Princeton University.

## **ABOUT THE YOUTH ORCHESTRA OF CENTRAL JERSEY**

The Youth Orchestra of Central Jersey was founded in 1978 by the late Portia Sonnenfeld as a preparatory orchestra for the Mercer County Symphony Orchestra (now called the Greater Princeton Youth Orchestra). Ms. Sonnenfeld shaped the ensemble into a group capable of performing the standard orchestra literature and 20<sup>th</sup> century works. It then grew to encompass two string orchestras and a wind ensemble, and became known as the String Preparatory Orchestra. In 1999, with increased enrollment, the orchestra was incorporated under the name "Youth Orchestra of Central Jersey."

Venues have included Princeton University's Richardson Auditorium, Rutgers University's Nicholas Music Center, the Ocean City Music Pier in New Jersey, Mayo Hall at TCNJ, Kendall Hall at TCNJ, the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Heritage Festival Competition in Boston, the Niagara International Music Festival, the Canadian Broadcasting Center, the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, Haydn Hall in Esterhazy, Austria, Bethlehem Chapel in Prague, the Czech Radio

Station Recording Studio in Prague, Peterskirche in Leipzig, and the Französische Friedrichstadt Kirche am Gendarmenmarkt in Berlin.

Unique to the Youth Orchestra of Central Jersey are its chamber groups for flute, saxophone, brass, woodwinds, and percussion that offer an unparalleled opportunity for small ensembles that feature these instruments in performance. YOCJ Jersey is a growing, vibrant organization that looks forward to carrying on the tradition of providing diverse musical experiences to the talented young musicians of our region.

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