

ORCHpress

Marin Alsop, OrchKids Founding Director & BSO Music Director

Rheda Becker & Robert Meyerhoff, OrchKids Founding Donors

Baltimore Symphony Orchestra
ORCHkids
planting seeds for a bright future

FALL 2020

A Virtual Welcome Back



Ms. Sandra's flute class getting warmed up!

Message from Executive Director, Raquel Gilmer

Welcome back to another school year with OrchKids! While we are continuing to operate virtually for now, we are hard at work delivering robust programming to Baltimore City students, keeping them engaged in learning and having fun.

We are so grateful to everyone in our community – students, families, teachers, staff, school personnel, community partners, and YOU – for standing by us as we continue to navigate uncharted waters. Without your unprecedented support, we would not be here today to welcome our students back to another exciting year.

Despite the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has presented us, OrchKids continues to play on and persevere. Our 2020-21 school year programming is well under way. In addition to providing in-school virtual programming for our city school partners, we are also providing the following on-line after school programming and services:

◆**Free, loaner devices to support online instruction:** OrchKids is happy to be able to loan Google Chrome Books to students who do not have access to personal devices at home in order to better support musical learning, as well as students' academic studies.

◆**Live, On-line Group and Private Music Lessons and Online Ensembles**

◆**Online Creative Composition Workshops**

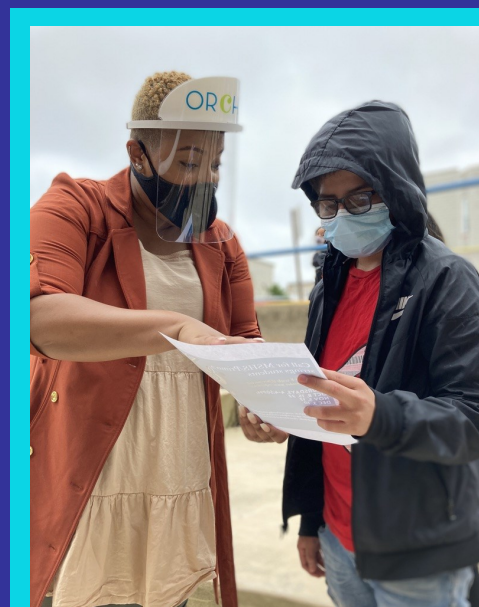
◆**Community Time:** Students may opt in to join on-line hangouts with friends and program staff to share and participate in fun activities.

◆**Book Club:** Another opt in activity to keep students reading while learning from home.

◆**Social Work Support:** Through a partnership that began last year with the University of Maryland School of Social Work, OrchKids has four social work interns embedded in our program to lend social/emotional support to students and families, as well as help link them to direct services for aid such as rental and utility assistance, food deliveries, and more.

◆**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** OrchKids has partnered with local PPE company, Shield Pals, to develop safety equipment specifically for our young musicians and staff. It is our great hope that we will be able to resume in-person lessons sometime in the new year and Shield Pals will be helping to keep us safe when the time comes!

None of this would be possible without our dedicated staff and music teachers, our resilient students and families, and YOU, our generous donors – **thank you!** I hope you enjoy reading more about all that is happening at OrchKids now and in the months to come!



Shield Pals created OrchKids face shields to ensure staff and student safety.



Shield Pals created "bell covers" for our brass and woodwind instruments in a variety of sizes to help cut down on potentially harmful aerosols. These were given to students during our Fall supply drive events.

Lighting Up Strings!

By Autumn England, OrchKids String Fellow



Ms. Autumn helping students tune their cellos

Since arriving on the scene two years ago, the String Fellows have brought new energy to string programming at OrchKids. Stationed at Highlandtown Elementary and Middle School #215, Margaret Brent Elementary and Middle School, and Mary Ann Winterling Elementary School, the fellows have been making the most of their teaching and administrative roles. With the majority of their time spent teaching, fellows occupy a unique space in the organization and help to strengthen communication between Teaching Artists and

OrchKids staff. Having perspective both inside the classroom and the office has allowed the fellows valuable insight into the structures of the program. Over the past two years, the fellows have used this knowledge to their advantage and played an important part in moving the department towards an ever more vibrant and comprehensive string curriculum.

The fellows utilize their hours to help with administrative projects, assist teachers in the classroom, and provide extra support for students. The fellows are able to spend time embedded in the community and become more involved with the process of each student’s musical development. This level of teacher engagement plays a crucial role in student success. With added time and support, students are more able to take full advantage of opportunities such as special workshops, travel, and summer camp experiences.

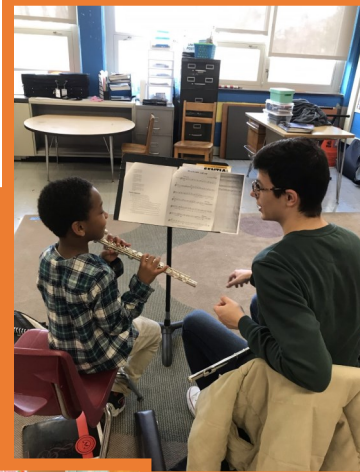
As part of their training, fellows participate in creative workshops, collaborating with students to compose new music. These creative sessions are remarkable for producing music that is undeniably Baltimorean. As the students create their own music, they inevitably end up writing about their own lives, the activities they enjoy, their interests, and their hopes and dreams. This incredibly personal process is at the heart of what OrchKids is all about: social change through connection,

through music. In-depth training in these areas has inspired the fellows to expand the diversity of repertoire in the string curriculum.

This new energy has been stirring up some hype around violin, viola, cello, and double bass throughout the community. The fellowship team has focused on increasing instructional time, expanding repertoire, encouraging student leadership, and using culturally responsive teaching practices, setting a promising trajectory for the string program. With two new String Fellows joining the team this fall, the future is looking bright for string students in Baltimore.



Cello students excitedly preparing for a special Master Class!



OrchKids Academy is Growing!

Now in its second year, we are excited to expand OrchKids Academy for nominated OrchKids students. Last year marked the launch of this new partnership between the Peabody Institute Federal Work Study program and OrchKids, providing young OrchKids students with the opportunity to have a private lesson each Saturday throughout the school year. In the pilot year, 25 of our students received this individualized coaching as we engaged 5 Peabody Work Study students in launching the program. The Academy allowed our students to deepen their understanding and skills learned during their weekly after-school OrchKids classes, as well as to dive into new challenging repertoire. This year, we are excited to announce an expansion in this program, as we anticipate providing around 70 OrchKids students from across Baltimore the chance to work with one of 12 Peabody Federal Work Study students. Classes will take place virtually throughout the fall and we look forward to planning another celebratory spring Academy Recital at the end of the school year.

Meet the New Fellows

OrchKids continues to expand its successful fellowship program in an effort to attract even more high-quality music teachers to the Baltimore area – teachers who, also, have a passion for using music as a vehicle for social change. We are thrilled to introduce you to our two new String Fellows, Samantha and Sheila. Here is a bit more about them, including why they wanted to join the OrchKids team:

Samantha Flores

A native of Tijuana, Mexico, cellist Samantha Flores has performed throughout Mexico, the United States, Europe, and South America. A strong advocate for the arts, Samantha is passionate about using music as a force to bring together communities through performance, engagement, and education. She has taught privately



Samantha Flores

for over a decade, in addition to teaching clinics, group lessons, and chamber music across the East Coast in various Suzuki and El Sistema inspired outreach programs.

Sheila Esquivel

A native of Chicago, Sheila was part of the People's Music School El Sistema Youth Programs as well as the Merit School of Music Conservatory. A senior at the Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University, Sheila is pursuing her bachelor's degree, majoring in Violin Performance, and is currently the standing presidential chair for the Latinx Student Union at Peabody. She also serves on the Anti-Racism Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee of the conservatory.

"I wanted to pursue the OrchKids string fellowship to learn creative ways of cultivating social justice through music and engage with other artists who have a similar mindset. OrchKids is a safe space where students of all backgrounds are welcomed, and it is because of this that I wanted to immerse myself into this community, where people are seen far beyond ethnicity and race. The OrchKids String Fellowship will provide me the tools to advance in my career goals of combining music performance, education, and connecting with people while having a voice in the phenomenon of change through music. I am incredibly honored to be part of this amazing organization that fosters the positive impact of music within the communities of Baltimore."

"The Orchkids Fellowship is only the beginning of my journey as a teaching artist and is the ultimate culminating step of my El Sistema journey. The fellowship has provided me with the tools and path to be able to give back to communities, such as my own back home, that need arts education the most. Without my El Sistema experience, I would have never been able to pursue higher education and dream big. Orchkids' mission is one that resonates with me more than I could put into words. I strive to bring the values of the organization into my students' lives through my classroom, lesson plans and ultimately- the performances we give to our community, as we strive to not only change one individual's life - but all of Baltimore as a whole."



Sheila Esquivel

Donor Spotlight: Imre

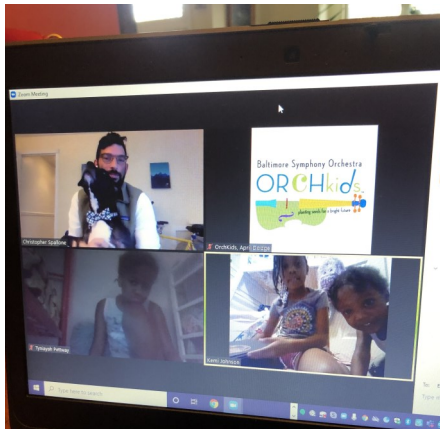
OrchKids is fortunate to have a variety of supporters and community partners. Whether they are individual donors, foundations or corporate donors they are each essential to helping OrchKids deliver its unique programming to our students. And, sometimes, special things grow from these relationships. Such is the case with our friends and partners at Imre. What started as a one-time engagement has grown into a strong community partnership.

"At Imre, we have intentionally worked to embed respect and empathy throughout all aspects of our business. As such, we have cultivated a culture of kindness that attracts employees who are passionate, open and friendly. In 2019, Maestra Alsop and OrchKids presented at our annual Vision Meeting, where we bring our 4 offices of 170 people together for a day of learning about the company's vision and goals for the year ahead. We always infuse the meeting with a cultural or community service moment or initiative. In this case, we talked about the importance of playing music individually, as well as the expectations of the conductor for the orchestra to have one sound. People coming together to work together."

"We are so excited to be in partnership with a program that shares our values and our goals to help lift up the communities we serve. The ability to impact the Baltimore community with an on-going relationship with OrchKids is a key cultural moment for us as a company. This tie to the community and giving back is an essential part of our DNA. Volunteering in OrchKids' Book Clubs has been an excellent way to work together and we look forward to deepening our partnership with OrchKids in the future."

-David Imre, Partner and CEO of Imre

Reading Books with a Little Help from our Friends



Siblings and pets are always welcome in Book Club!

read aloud and talked about their books. It was such a success that we brought it back as a component of our online after school program. This Fall, 10 volunteers from one of our corporate partners and donors, Imre, have been reading with students in weekly Book Club sessions. Like last summer, Book Club is an optional enrichment activity offered to students enrolled in our virtual after school program.

Also, like last summer, one of our most popular authors is back: Jerry Craft, author of *New Kid*, a favorite among our middle school students. Jerry's new book which was just released on October 6th is entitled *Class Act* and it is one of the hottest graphic novels in stores right now. Thanks to OrchKids volunteer, Nancy Colvin, and her friends at The Children's Book Store, OrchKids students each got a free copy to enjoy and help build their home libraries. But not only are Jerry's books back – Jerry himself stopped by OrchKids Zoom

classroom to talk to students about his books and answer questions! OrchKids invited our friends at Calvert to join in this very special Book Club event where Jerry talked about his love of reading and drawing, and how important it was for him to create characters that looked like him – something he didn't have growing up.



Author Jerry Craft answering questions from OrchKids and Calvert students

Book Club is back this Fall with new crew of Book Buddies and one very special guest! Over the summer, OrchKids partnered with students from The Calvert School as well as some community volunteers to host book club sessions where students and volunteers

Stay Tuned...

Collective Composition group workshops have been a core component of our program since its inception and now more than ever youth need an outlet for their voices to be heard. OrchKids will host five workshops this school year. The first of these is a unique project focused on the suffrage movement. In close partnership with Johns Hopkins University, OrchKids will embark on a fact-finding and inspiration-seeking journey guided through the writings of Elaine Weiss and Martha Jones to discover the intricate and contentious element of racism throughout the suffrage movement. OrchKids students will create a composition centered around three distinct themes of the suffrage movement: representation, voting, and the future of democracy. Stay tuned for more on this very special workshop!