

## Back to School – Year 10

by Alexandra Stout



*Students at the first Tutti Community Orchestra Rehearsal at YONA at St. Alphonsus School.*

The first few months back to school have been jam-packed for all the YONA sites. It is YONA's 10th year of operation, and the program is bigger than ever. There are 235 young musicians across four different sites in the city and a fifth site at Alexander First Nation. YONA students are learning a wide variety of instruments: the violin, viola, cello, bass, flute, clarinet, trombone, horn, and percussion. YONA has 3 tiers of skill level: Junior (beginner), Community (intermediate), and La Bruyère (senior) into which students are placed. With the success of the program, there are multiple initiatives that are strengthening the community and individual bonds amongst students across sites and within YONA's orchestras.

To create community across all the YONA sites, the first Tutti Community Orchestra Rehearsals have started this year. The Community Orchestra is the intermediate-level orchestra, and the Tutti rehearsals are four special days during the school year when all the musicians in Community Orchestra across our sites come together to play among their fellow musicians and friends. It is a way for students to come together as an orchestra and build community relationships and new skills.

The first Tutti Community Orchestra Rehearsal was at YONA at St. Alphonsus in October. It was a joyful and high-energy event, with lots of laughter, snacks, and learning about playing as an ensemble. How

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*Students enjoying a break outside during the Tutti rehearsal.*

do the students from YONA at St. Catherine's or YONA at St. Teresa do this exercise? Do all the students stop playing at the same time? All these

**“It has been 10 years filled with small and big successes, challenges overcome, beautiful music made, and lots of joy.”**

**- Jacquie McNulty, YONA Lead**

questions, and many more, were explored as the different sections of the orchestra came together.

Another key aspect of YONA as it grows is fostering mentorship. A handful of musicians have now been with YONA for years and they are taking on the exciting role of mentoring younger students. This speaks to YONA's goal of being a cyclical giving program. As students grow up and build confidence and skills, they help others grow as well!

Lastly, planning for some of YONA's annual events, such as the Winter Concert and the Spring fundraising event, Road to Joy, is well underway. There are so many exciting possibilities being explored about how to best showcase our program including our many ensembles. With the program being larger than ever, there are always logistical questions being creatively solved! Stay tuned for later editions of Quarter Notes that will highlight all of these, and many more, exciting YONA updates. 🎵

# Meet the Teacher!

This year, the YONA team is ecstatic to be working with multiple new Teaching Artists. Get to know these skilled folks by reading about their expertise and why they're excited to be working with YONA.



"My name is **Cheryl Vinge** and I am thrilled to be a YONA – Sistema Woodwind Teaching Artist! I studied flute and piccolo at the Conservatory of Music/University of Regina with Jane Schudel and Sandra Hoffman, of the Regina Symphony. Under the direction of Dr. Leyton-Brown, I played with the University of Regina Orchestra. Upon moving to Ontario, I was able to complete my Royal Conservatory studies. Currently, I am excited to be teaching and learning along with students at YONA-Sistema (Kipohtakâw). What excites me the most about working with YONA is that, through music, the students and I will continue to grow and enhance our world!"



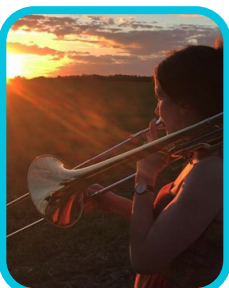
"My name is **Jodi Penner** and I have performed extensively in opera and musical theatre, as well as in BBC radio dramas, TV, and two solo albums. Originally from California, I finished my MMus in voice at the University of Alberta in 2011 and I am currently working on my Doctorate of Music in Choral Conducting and Voice Performance at the University of Alberta under Timothy Shantz and John Tessier. I am also the director of the new bilingual Spanish choir in Edmonton called Voces Alegres! What excites me most about being the Choir Teaching Artist with YONA is to inspire and foster a love of singing with the students that they will hopefully carry throughout their lifetime. I love to see their personalities unfold as they gain confidence and learn more about music!"



"I am **Rebecca Merkley** and I am a multi-faceted theatre artist and instructor. I write, compose, direct, produce, and perform my own work, which prioritizes women, non-binary, and queer artists. I was thrilled to lead an Azimuth Theatre workshop this season and coach recent BFA grads for their theatre auditions (Theatre Alberta). My compositions can be found in the sound design for "Pisces," a new documentary by Darrin Hagen (Theatre Network). I am currently recording a concept album by Darrin Hagen (Guys In Disguise) and workshopping a new musical by Bret Dahl. What excites me most about working with YONA is that I love working with the kids and their families!"



"I'm **Garrett Cosgrave** and I am a jack of all trades hailing from the hills of Massachusetts. I will soon complete a Secondary Education degree at the University of Alberta, with Music as my primary subject. I enjoy making up silly songs for my daughter, playing board games with my wife (despite routine losses), and following professional Sumo wrestling. What most excites me about working with YONA is knowing that my work is contributing positively to the development of the next generation. It's a privilege to pass on the joy of music that I inherited from my grandfather."



"My name is **Olivia Menard** and I am a trombonist, composer, and teacher from the Edmonton area. I have been involved with the YONA Sistema program since 2015 as a volunteer, substitute Teaching Artist, and substitute Site Manager. I am thrilled to be joining this year as the Trombone and Trumpet Teaching Artist and the Site Manager at the Winspear Centre. In addition to my role with YONA, I teach with Edmonton Catholic Schools and at La Girandole Dance Studio, as well as freelancing as a trombonist. What excites me most about working with YONA is sharing my passion for brass instruments and the musical community with young people!"



# Snack Time: A YONA Favourite

by Kyra Droog

There's nothing more energizing than getting to experience the controlled chaos that is snack time at YONA. Students come into the classroom and take their seats, talking excitedly to their friends and YONA instructors. "What's for snack today?" they'll ask excitedly. "What is it?"

With big smiles underneath their masks, the YONA instructors will begin to hand out the day's snack to happy YONA students. "Oranges are my favourite!" grins one student, as he holds the orange up. "Look, it's bigger than my fist!"

"Ooh, granola bars," another student sings happily. "The best snack!"

With 146 YONA days each year, two snacks each day, and four YONA sites to support, snack time is a key aspect of the YONA program. In addition to snacks, YONA staff also ensure that food is

available at the end of the day for students to take home if they choose – ensuring that no child leaves YONA hungry.

**"We start every YONA day off right with a healthy snack enjoyed among friends."**

**- Jacquie McNulty, YONA Lead**

"It's hard to focus, learn, and do our best when we are hungry," says Jacquie McNulty, YONA Lead. "The nutrition program is an important component of our holistic approach to supporting YONA students. We start every YONA day off right with a healthy snack enjoyed among friends."

YONA staff work hard to ensure that a variety of snacks are offered, so that everyone has options and can find something they like. From classic granola bars to hummus and pita bread to veggies and dip (of which broccoli, surprisingly enough, is a favourite), YONA students are able to make their own choices about what snack is best for them. Having the ability to choose is an important part of snack time, because it helps YONA students stay comfortable and happy in their environment and gives them the autonomy to make their own decisions.

Snack time at YONA wouldn't be possible without the generous support of Cameron Corporation, YONA's nutrition sponsor. Thank you to everyone at Cameron Corporation your continued support in keeping our YONA students happy, healthy, and well-fed! 🎵





by Alexandra Stout

# Their Very Own Flutes:

## St. Alphonsus Woodwind Instrument Graduation

On a chilly November afternoon, an exciting event occurred at St. Alphonsus school. Junior woodwind musicians graduated from the recorder to the next step in their musical journey: the flute. The students got to pick out the colour of their flute beforehand: blue, pink, or green. They were then carefully laid out across the table in the gym.

As other students and parents took their places in the gym to watch the graduation, the woodwind musicians were in their classroom, doing their final rehearsal with their teacher, Ms. Natalie. It began with the singing of their motto: "At YONA, we have fun and try our best!". Then, the students warmed up, had one last run-through of songs, and were given a final reminder about posture. Of course, there were also some delicious cheese strings and bananas to eat. The energy was through the roof, with an impromptu jam session breaking out and drumming on the table.

Finally, it was time. The youth formed a line and Ms. Natalie led them down the hall to the gym. As they entered, "Pomp and Circumstance" played, and all their fellow students and friends gave the musicians high-fives. They proudly took their place, standing, in front of all their supporters. They demonstrated all their skillfully learnt techniques; how to stand up straight, play certain notes on

their recorders, and perform loud and proud.

Afterwards, there was an important overview of the Caring for Your Instrument Contract. One of the teachers read through the agreement, explaining to all the students how to take care of the new flutes. "No one can play your instrument but you ... even your sibling!" All the junior woodwind musicians agreed to the terms, and it was now time for them to receive their instruments!

One by one, each junior woodwind was called up and presented with their colourful flute and case, complete with a personalized name tag. They clutched them excitedly as they returned to their spot, awaiting the moment they got to play their first note. When each student had their flute, Ms. Natalie helped them all figure out the best way to hold the instruments and prepared them for the moment.

1 ... 2 ... 3 ... play!

A cacophony of whistles, squeaks, and joy ensued.

Stay tuned for photos and videos of this magical event! 🎵



## Donate to YONA-Sistema

**You can support the future of YONA-Sistema by donating money, time, or instruments.** When you give, you put a musical instrument in the hands of a child. This can become so much more than a simple vessel for sound – it can become an instrument for growth, development, and change. Every gift, great or small, makes a difference in the life of a child and contributes to social change in our community.

Through YONA-Sistema, youth in Northern Alberta’s priority neighbourhoods will experience an extraordinary opportunity for social, emotional, academic, and musical development. They will develop lifelong values and skills that will promote the future success of these youth and of their communities.

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