



First Year YONA Students get set to perform at Road to Joy

By Trena Taralson

This year's Road to Joy fundraising concert, presented by EPCOR, is just over a month away and if you're waiting to get your tickets for this spectacular event – don't put it off any longer!

You won't want to miss what is the highlight of the season for many YONA students and staff, as they take to the Winspear stage alongside members of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra.

Taking place on May 29th at 7 PM, this year's concert will feature students from all five YONA sites.

At one point in the show, it may sound like a herd of elephants gracing the Winspear stage – that will be the junior basses, playing their part called “The Elephant” in *Carnival of the Animals* by Camille Saint-Saëns. They're teaming up with the junior flutes from the St. Alphonsus site to perform the piece.

These students are in their first year at YONA and their teaching artist, Alex Valle, says they have been making amazing progress.

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“They’ve learned to read and understand a whole new language.”

- Alex Valle, YONA Teaching Artist

“It’s almost hard to believe that seven months ago, some of them had never even heard of their instruments. They know how to play, how to perform and they’ve learned to read and understand a whole new language.”

When asked about combining these two instruments in particular, Valle points out there are unique benefits. “It allows us to have both ends of the spectrum, melody and harmony present. The kids have begun to understand their roles as either a bass or soprano instrument and they are developing an understanding of the fact that their roles exist in conjunction with one another.

It works because of communication, respect, and patience. At the end of the day, its impact is easy to beam about and even easier to see. These kids walk into class and irrespective of how their day went, when they get their instrument in hand, they’re all smiles.”

Don’t miss your chance to hear these students in one of their very first concert performances! 🎵

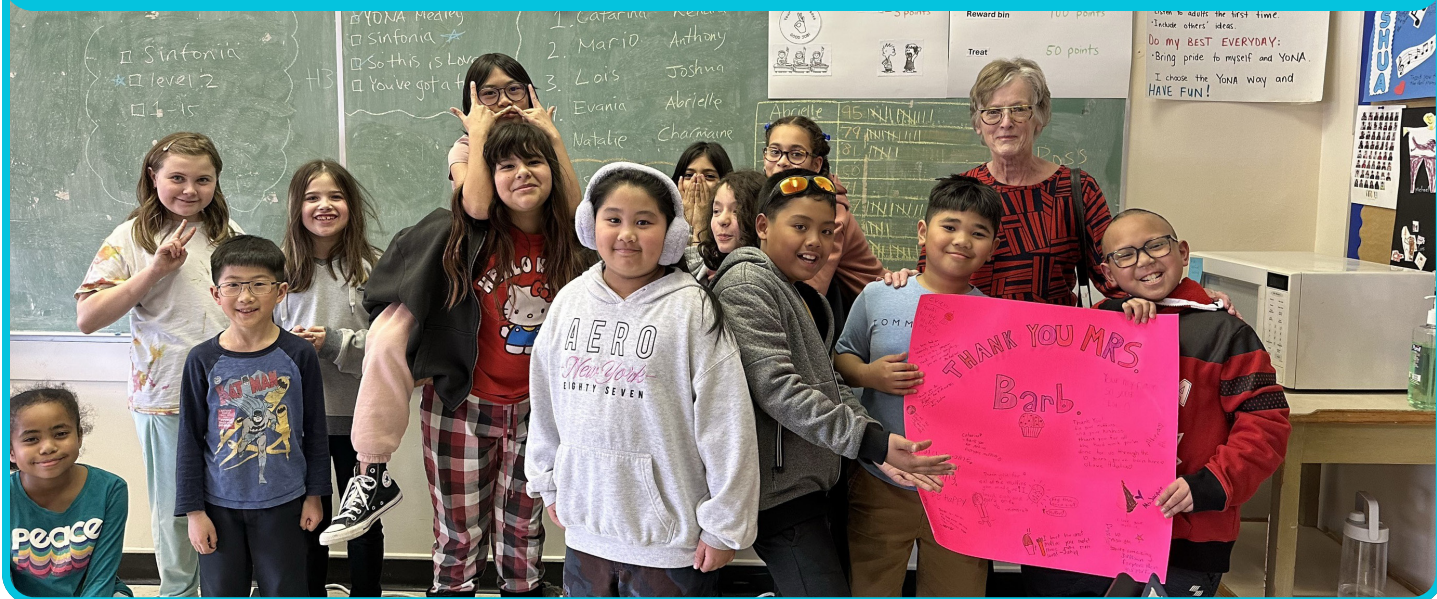


To book your free tickets to this amazing fundraising concert in support of YONA, visit winspearcentre.com.

Thank you, Ms. Barb!

By Trena Taralson

Long-time YONA Volunteer Hangs Up Her Apron



For the first 10 years of YONA, Ms. Barb was a friendly face for the students of YONA. As a weekly volunteer in the program, she greeted the kids with a smile and helping hand.

As a retired teacher, Barb Koshman recognized the benefits the Sistema program would have on students from the beginning. "The Sistema program provides so much for kids, not just learning how to play a musical instrument, but also develops their skills in working together, increasing their sense of responsibility, working diligently, and keeping at it when things were hard."

The muffins she baked every Wednesday for the students will be remembered as a highlight for many! Some weeks, she baked as many as 11 dozen to add to the student's daily snack provided by the program.

"I also made sure that the YONA staff would have muffins – after all, they worked hard and needed a treat, for regular days and for special events. So, I think the most I baked for an event would have been about 14 dozen muffins. Very rarely did any come home with me!"

This year, Ms. Barb has taken a step back from volunteering for health reasons. To show their appreciation for all she has done for the program, some students got together to make her a thank you card.

"I loved the carrot muffins she made – delicious!" – Joshua

"I loved the muffins – especially the blueberry!" – Charmaine

"Thank you for all your hard work!" – Mario

"Ms. Barb has been and remains a pillar within the YONA community."

- Jacquie McNulty, YONA Lead

"Ms. Barb has been and remains a pillar within the YONA community," says YONA-Sistema Lead, Jacquie McNulty. "Over the years, she has fostered meaningful relationships with students and staff and has supported the program in countless ways. YONA was always a little bit brighter when it was a Ms. Barb day."

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Not only has Ms. Barb been a long time YONA volunteer, but she and her late husband Darcy are also Founding YONA donors. Their belief in the program and ongoing support has been instrumental in helping YONA grow and reach more students.

“When we learned that the Winspear was thinking about bringing the Sistema program to Edmonton, I was so glad of it, as was Darcy. There are lots of very popular and good sports activities available for kids, but not all kids are into sports, and it can be very expensive for parents. Both Darcy and I felt there needed to be other options.

It’s been wonderful to see the students’ progress through YONA and grow into young adults. I enjoy seeing the students who have moved beyond YONA and learning what they are doing now. I miss the ones who have gone separate paths but feel that a lot of the good that comes with being a part of YONA is staying with them.”

On behalf of everyone at YONA, thank you Ms. Barb for your immeasurable love and support. We wish you all the best! 🎵



YONA Spotlight: Joaquin, 1st year bass student



Q. What do you like most about YONA?

Music, working currently on the Elephant. It’s a piece about the animals. It’s big and bulky like an elephant. It’s challenging in a good way!

Q: What do you like about the bass?

The sounds, the low register. I can feel it in my chest.

Q. Do you want to play music outside of YONA?

Yeah, I want to play popular songs with my friends because it would keep me motivated.

Q. How do you prepare for YONA every day?

I warm up with scales and my favourite songs.

Q. What would you want to tell a new student to YONA?

The day-to-day activities, singing in the bass class. I like some of the Friday games with Mr. Andreas like musical chairs.

Step to the beat:

Funding needed for indoor footwear

By Trena Taralson

Did you know students at YONA's St. Alphonsus and St. Teresa of Calcutta sites are offered a pair of indoor Crocs free of charge?

To keep students comfortable and our sites clean, YONA requires each child to keep a pair of indoor shoes on site. So, for the past nine years, students in the program have been fitted with a pair of Crocs to last them throughout the year.

Footwear for kids, especially in equity seeking neighbourhoods, is an often-overlooked issue. Growing kids wear through and grow out of shoes quickly!

This is why YONA has chosen to provide Crocs for these students. The kids can customize their own, and sizing seems to be less of an issue compared to buying actual sneakers or indoor shoes.

As YONA Site Manager, Booker Diduck, points out, the shoes provide one less barrier between the kids and their learning.

"To play music and learn effectively at any level requires comfort. Our Crocs are a huge part of keeping our young musicians comfortable and happy."

As the program has grown, so has the need for more and more shoes! The budget to provide these Crocs grew an additional \$1,000 this year.

If you are interested in supporting the students in this way, you can give online at www.yona-sistema.com/support-us, including "Croc funding" in the comments section. Any additional funding raised will go towards the general needs of the program.

Thank you for your generosity and support of these students! Together, we can ensure they have the tools they need to succeed and thrive at YONA! 🎵

If you are interested in supporting the students in this way, you can give online at yona-sistema.com/support-us including "Croc funding" in the comments section.



YONA Winter Concert 2024: Recap

By Rudy Howell



Each February, the YONA Winter Concert brings together students from across our sites to the Winspear Centre to perform what they have learned in front of an intimate and encouraging audience. Rooted in sharing, this concert is the first of two significant performance opportunities during the school year.

This year's concert included 115 students from St. Alphonsus School, St. Teresa School, St. Catherine School, and our Winspear Centre site. While youth from Kipohtakâw Education Centre (KEC) on Alexander First Nation were unable to attend, the KEC Singers were present to perform an "Honour Song" to commence the concert.

"We encourage all our students to bring as many family members as possible to experience the magic of our concert hall. For many families, this is the first time that they are at the Winspear Centre or even downtown. So, it is a special occasion and a beautiful moment for the community to come together," said Jacquie McNulty, YONA Lead.

As the students excitedly arrived at the Winspear Centre, they were guided to their designated green rooms to begin their concert preparations.

For example, St. Teresa students completed hand stretches and deep breaths while St. Catherine students rehearsed how to stand and face the audience while playing. Dress rehearsals took place on stage with conductor Cosette Justo Valdés. Before showtime, everyone wished each other good luck as they enjoyed a pizza dinner together backstage.



A palpable sense of pride and accomplishment reverberated throughout the chamber when our community choir began the evening's first performance. Their confident voices embodied all the hard work they had invested in the program during the first half of the school year. Clearly, they had been patiently waiting for their time to shine in the spotlight.

“It is a special occasion and a beautiful moment for the community to come together.”

- Jacquie McNulty, YONA Lead

Each cohort's performance reminded the audience of YONA's positive impact on our community's youth. For many of them, stepping on stage to play an orchestral instrument is something they never would have imagined doing before joining the program. To see them not only play but excel at their instruments in an ensemble setting during the YONA Winter Concert was an undeniably heartwarming and emotional experience.

Understandably, many parents could not resist the urge to film every moment.

“We see students and families benefit from performing because of the sense of pride built within the individual. It proves to students that they can achieve things, which validates long-term goals and hard work. It tells them that they can apply that knowledge to other hard things in life,” said McNulty.

YONA's percussion cohort performed the world premiere of their own composition titled “Midnight Palace,” which they wrote with the help of their teaching artist, Ms. Elaine, last fall. It was an extraordinary moment for our smallest instrument cohort to demonstrate both their musicianship and burgeoning creativity.

After the concert, students reunited with their families in the lobby, where hugs and high-fives were abundant. To cap off the night, everyone enjoyed fresh-baked cookies supplied by Bon Ton Bakery. Thank you to all our generous donors and community funders who continue to make YONA possible.

Our students now turn their attention to Road to Joy: Yay for YONA on May 29, 2024. Tickets are available at winspearcentre.com. 🎵





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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