



REMEMBERING ROAD TO JOY



On June 2nd, 2026, the Winspear concert hall was once again filled with the sounds of our young musicians as they took to the stage for this year's annual Road to Joy fundraiser, presented by EPCOR. The evening is always a highlight for YONA students and their many supporters – an opportunity for the entire YONA community to come together in celebration of the amazing growth our young people have accomplished.

The evening featured performances from the YONA Choir, Community Orchestra, the junior brass class from our new Ivor Dent school site, as well as the La Bruyère Orchestra playing alongside the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra. Shah Sadikov conducted the concert after joining YONA earlier this year as the program's new Artistic Director.



"As this was my first Road to Joy, it is difficult to put into words the excitement and pride I felt alongside my wonderful colleagues and students. I am incredibly proud of our students for their dedication and hard work, and grateful for the inspiring performance they delivered."

- Shah Sadikov, YONA Artistic Director

Your first Road to Joy is always one to remember. For first-year student Elias at the Ivor Dent school site, the experience was both exciting and rewarding.

"It was fun to perform at Road to Joy! At first, I was nervous but now after I've seen everything, I realized I was ready and excited! I was happy because there were so many people that watched and were proud of us. I'm so glad that there's so much happiness in YONA. It was like we were a plant that grew so fast—in three months!"

- Elias, YONA trumpet student



Inspired by EPCOR's matching message, our amazing audience gave a record breaking \$144,326 to support YONA! There are no words to express our immense gratitude to everyone who made the event an outstanding success. Thank you.

ENDING THE YEAR IN HARMONY



La Bruyère Orchestra musicians join students at the St. Alphonsus site for their year-end recital on June 17th.

As the 13th year of YONA came to a close at the end of June, our La Bruyère Orchestra hit the road, visiting our St. Catherine, Ivor Dent, and St. Alphonsus sites to celebrate with students at their year-end recitals.

One of the highlights of each visit was performing the YONA Medley together. For many of our younger musicians, it was their first opportunity to play this special piece alongside our senior level students.

This is the second year the La Bruyère Orchestra has done this end of the year tour, which has proved to be a wonderful opportunity to strengthen relationships across the YONA family. It was also the perfect way to end another incredible YONA term and celebrate all that has been accomplished throughout the year. Congratulations students, we look forward to seeing you all in September!

FROM YONA TO WHAT'S NEXT

Congratulations to YONA trombone student, Riley, who just graduated High School!

How has YONA helped shape who you are today?

Yona has helped shape me by helping me build confidence and inspiring me to grow with my passion for music!

What is your favourite YONA memory?

It's when I moved up into the La Bruyère Orchestra. It gave me recognition for all the hard work I had been putting into my instrument, and it reassured me that with great effort comes great rewards.

What are your hopes and plans for the future?

I've been accepted to the University of Alberta, where I'll be attending this fall. My hopes and plans are to continue making music by studying for a degree in Music and a degree in Education. I also hope to come back to help inspire others!



PRIORITIZING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



YONA Teaching Artist Yeganeh with her violin students at our St. Catherine site.

While our students enjoyed a well-earned Spring break back in March and April, our YONA staff took the opportunity to connect, reflect, and invest in professional development.

Every season, YONA hosts approximately 20 Professional Development (PD) days for our program teaching artists, site coordinators, and administrative team to learn, grow, and reflect as a program. Professional Development takes place in September at the start of the school year, in October after three weeks of programming, and over the spring break in March. Each session is specifically tailored to respond to current staff and student needs, and changes year over year to continuously evolve with our diverse program community. This is one of the many ways YONA continues to invest in itself as a program – directly benefitting both staff and students' learning.

YONA's 2026 spring break PD opened on Friday, March 20 at the newest Ivor Dent location, giving the entire YONA team the opportunity to tour and experience the site! This was followed the next week by sessions both at the Winspear and St. Alphonsus YONA sites, where the team focused on topics such as socio-emotional learning, rhythmic literacy, and conducting while leading an ensemble. We were also fortunate to have a guest presentation by Neurowise Edmonton – a new local organization providing professional support to children and adults with ADHD. Together these sessions work to enhance YONA's continued commitment to our core organizational values: inclusivity, community, peer mentorship, and intensive instruction.

YONA SPOTLIGHT: KITANA, TRUMPET STUDENT



Kitana, first year YONA student at our Ivor Dent site

How long have you been in YONA?

Since February.

What are your favourite songs to play and why?

We're learning a blues song for Road to Joy. It sounds really great and I like it! We also learned Hot Cross Buns. I've learned how to play that on recorder and drums too (at my home).

How would you describe YONA?

We play music, we have snack, we have recess... It's fun, obviously, and the people are really nice.

What is your favourite YONA memory?

Probably the [instrument] graduation! And also, pretty much every day is a good memory. It's nice to spend time with friends and the best is seeing Mr. Kevin and Ms. Ali.

You can keep up to date on all of the happenings at YONA, learn more about our amazing students and staff, and what they're working on.

Instagram: [@yonasistema](https://www.instagram.com/yonasistema)

Facebook: [YONA-Sistema](https://www.facebook.com/YONA-Sistema)

THANK YOU

