



canberra
symphony
orchestra

future
pathways

cso youth chamber orchestra



2026 handbook

Welcome

Welcome to the CSO Youth Chamber Orchestra, an exciting performance enrichment program for advanced musicians aged 12 to 19, led by CSO string tutors. This program will take your individual, chamber and orchestral playing to the next level and help you develop key musicianship and professional skills for success.

This handbook outlines expectations and information to help you get the most out of this ensemble.

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Enrolment

Acceptance of offer

Participants must complete the participant information form **by COB Monday 19 January 2026** to secure their place in the CSYCO program.

Fees

The CSYCO participation fee in 2026 is **\$650.00 plus GST**, payable to the CSO.

Participants will receive an invoice via email once they have submitted the completed participant information form. Invoices must be paid **within 14 days**, prior to rehearsals commencing.

The participation fee is **non-refundable** in the event that a participant withdraws from the program. In extenuating circumstances, the CSO may consider a full or partial refund at its discretion, on a case-by-case basis.

Financial support

A number of scholarships are available to assist musicians facing financial barriers to participation. Each scholarship covers the tuition fee for one participant, for one year.

To apply for a scholarship, complete the relevant section of the participant information form. Applicants will be notified of the results of their application **by Monday 26 January 2026**.

Rehearsals, performance classes and concerts

Venue, dates and times

Rehearsals and performance classes will run weekly during the school term on Tuesdays. Rehearsals and performance classes will take place at the ANU School of Music (William Herbert Place, Canberra).

Both groups will perform **once per Term** either in open rehearsal or public concerts. Additional, ad hoc opportunities may arise throughout the year as part of the broader Future Pathways Program and other CSO events. Participant availability will be considered prior to scheduling of additional projects or performances.

Rehearsal / performance class schedule

	<i>Weekday</i>	<i>Rehearsal time</i>	<i>Performance class time</i>
CSYCO	Tuesdays	5pm–6.30pm (1.5 hours)	6.30pm–7pm (30 minutes)

2026 term dates / concert schedule

Term 1	Tuesday 10 February - 24 March	Open rehearsal in the week commencing 30 March
Term 2	Tuesday 21 April- 9 June	Concert in the week commencing 15 June
Term 3	Tuesday 21 July - 08 September	Open rehearsal in the week commencing 14 September
Term 4	Tuesday 13 October - 10 November	Concert in the week commencing 16 November

Attendance

Rehearsal attendance is mandatory unless leave has been granted by the CSO Youth Chamber Orchestra Pathways Team.

Participants must perform at performance class **at least once per term**.

Concerts and open rehearsals are compulsory for all CSO Youth Chamber orchestra participants. Participants unable to attend a performance should notify the Future Pathways program team as soon as possible.

See also Policies: Absences

Access

Rehearsals are closed to all non-participants, including parents and guardians. Parents and guardians are asked to wait outside rehearsal rooms when collecting participants.

Equipment

All participants must bring the following equipment to rehearsals:

- Music stand and parts – *music will be provided two weeks before the first rehearsal*
- 2B pencils and eraser – *music must not be marked with anything other than pencil*

String players must also bring:

- Spare strings
- Mutes – *if applicable*
- Endpin stops / donuts – *cello and double bass players*
- Stools – *double bass players*

All personal belongings should be clearly labelled with the participant's name. *The CSO is unable to provide spare equipment to participants.*

Rehearsal etiquette and expectations

A successful ensemble is a team effort. A key focus of the program is learning to contribute fully to the ensemble and its goals through dedicated home practice, preparation, attendance and consideration for fellow musicians.

Expectations

- Know your rehearsal and concert schedule. Keep an accurate diary and attend all ensemble commitments except where leave has been granted.
- Know your repertoire and practise throughout the week.
- Be punctual – be seated and ready to play at least 5 minutes **before the rehearsal start time**.
- Bring all the required equipment, including stand, pencil and instrument accessories / spares.
- Turn off phones and other electronic devices before rehearsals and performances.
- If you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms or you are otherwise unwell, notify the CSO as soon as possible and do not attend rehearsals, performances or other events.
- For known absences, request leave **at least 10 days in advance**. *If you're unwell and unable to attend, or running late on the day, notify the CSO at the earliest opportunity.*

Participants are expected to commit to the ensemble program for the full calendar year and participate fully in all rehearsals, performances and other activities (except in the event that participants are unwell or where leave has been granted).

CSO Youth Chamber ensemble is an extension program designed to build on existing learning.

Students already participating in school ensembles or orchestra programs are expected to continue in these programs.

College and tertiary students are asked to consider examination periods and discuss potential leave well in advance with the Future Pathways Team.

Content

Ensemble rehearsals will explore the vast repertoire for string chamber orchestra.

Performance classes will give participants the opportunity to present 'work in progress' or 'performance ready' pieces and receive constructive feedback from peers and the Future Pathways Team.

Concert attire

Participants are expected to dress professionally in 'concert blacks' for all performances. Attire should not be faded or damaged. Concert wear should be plain, with no visible branding or logos.

Participants who are not appropriately attired may be asked to change their attire or may be seated in an alternate position or excluded from the performance.

Concert blacks

Option A

Black shirt / blouse
Black trousers
Black socks
Black dress shoes

Option B

Black shirt / blouse
Black skirt
Black stockings
Black dress shoes

Option C

Black dress
Black stockings
Black dress shoes

Skirts and dresses should **cover the knee when seated**. Dress trousers only – no jeans.

Shirts and blouses should cover the shoulder; sleeveless, strapless, low-cut or 'midriff' shirts are not appropriate.

Dress shoes only – no running shoes, thongs or Doc Martens.

Sheet music and practice

Expectations

Participants are expected to learn their parts in advance, practise regularly throughout the week and come prepared to each rehearsal.

Participants are responsible for bringing their music to and from each rehearsal, in hard copy or on a tablet or other appropriate device.

Format

Music will be available digitally and in hard copy **two weeks prior** to the first rehearsal. Participants are invited to collect hard copies from the CSO office and meet the CSO team, during business hours.

Copyright

For copyright reasons, participants must not share music with non-participants or otherwise copy or disseminate parts.

Policies

Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct

Participants are expected to treat staff and fellow participants with respect at all times and conduct themselves professionally as ambassadors of the CSO. Participants must not use language that is sexist, racist, homophobic or otherwise demeaning or offensive.

Bullying or abuse of any kind, physical or verbal, will not be tolerated.

Participants are expected to respect each other's property and the property and facilities of the CSO, the ANU School of Music and other performance and rehearsal venues. Participants will be held financially responsible for any loss or damage caused by deliberate or negligent behaviour.

All participants and parents / guardians are expected to abide by the CSO Child Protection Policy. The CSO reserves the right to remove any participant from this program if their behaviour is consistently and deliberately disruptive, detrimental to their wellbeing or the wellbeing of staff and fellow participants, or otherwise contravenes the Child Protection Policy.

Health and Safety

Participants are required to provide relevant medical information in the participant information form, including any pre-existing medical conditions. Information will be kept confidential and will only be disclosed to First Aid or professional medical personnel in the event of a medical emergency. The CSO must be notified immediately of any new medical conditions or changes to the information provided in the participant information form.

By enrolling in this program, participants (or their parents or guardians, for participants aged under 18) authorise the CSO to seek medical attention on the participant's behalf and at their expense, as the CSO deems appropriate, in the event of injury or illness during a scheduled activity.

A CSO staff member trained in First Aid will attend all ensemble rehearsals and performances.

Participants who become aware of a health and safety risk to themselves or other participants during an ensemble activity are expected to notify a member of CSO staff immediately. Given the physically demanding nature of playing a musical instrument, participants must inform the CSO in writing if they develop a physical injury that inhibits their ability to rehearse or perform with the ensemble.

COVID-19

All CSYCO rehearsals, performances and other activities will be delivered in line with ACT Government COVID-safe requirements.

We request you do not attend CSYCO rehearsals or concerts if you are unwell or experiencing cold, flu or COVID-19 symptoms.

Supervision

When dropping participants off for rehearsal, parents / guardians of participants under the age of 18 are responsible for ensuring their child is in the care of a CSO staff member before departing.

Supervision is available 15 minutes prior to a rehearsal or performance and up to 15 minutes after a rehearsal or performance. The CSO is not responsible for supervision outside these times or in areas other than the rehearsal room and its immediate surrounds.

If a parent or guardian is running late to collect a participant under the age of 18, they are asked to notify a CSO staff member phone.

Parents and guardians may wait outside the rehearsal room to collect participants. Parents and guardians are asked not to enter the rehearsal room.

Absences and leave

Known absences

Participants are expected to organise social activities and other performance commitments around the CSYCO schedule. The CSO will consider leave requests for illness, compulsory school / university commitments, extension opportunities, participation in cultural or religious holidays or activities, and on compassionate grounds.

Leave requests for known absences must be submitted in writing to future.pathways@csso.org.au at **least 10 days in advance**. *This includes instances where a participant must arrive late to a rehearsal or leave early.*

Leave will not be granted for rehearsals or performances with other ensembles, except where these commitments have been made prior to confirmation of the relevant Youth Chamber Orchestra date.

Unforeseen absences

If a participant is running late or is unwell on the day of a rehearsal or performance, the CSO should be notified by phone as soon as possible. *A mobile number will be provided to participants in advance of rehearsals commencing.*

Unexplained absences

Participants who regularly arrive late or are repeatedly absent without leave may forfeit their position in the ensemble program. The CSO has a duty of care to participants and will contact parents / guardians if a participant is marked absent without notice.

Instruments and insurance

Participants are responsible for their own instruments and accessories, including spare strings, and any other personal belongings.

The CSO encourages participants to insure their instruments against loss or damage. The CSO will not accept responsibility for any loss or damage of participants' instruments or other belongings at CSO events or during transit to or from CSO events.

Alcohol and illicit substances

The consumption of alcohol or illicit substances is strictly prohibited during any CSO activity, formal or informal. Any participant found to be in possession of, or under the influence of, illicit substances or alcohol will be dismissed on the spot from CSO programs.

The CSO will report any use or possession of illicit substances to relevant authorities, as well as any participants under the age of 18 in possession of, or under the influence of, alcohol or tobacco products.

Communication

CSO Future Pathways Team

Donna Parkes

Future Pathways Program Manager

Lindy Reksten

Orchestral Development Liaison

Angela Lount

Community and Education Liaison

All CSO Youth Chamber Ensemble communication should be directed to Donna Parkes in the first instance via **future.pathways@csso.org.au**

For time-sensitive enquiries, Donna is contactable via 0479 085 538.

The CSO is also contactable during business hours via 02 6247 9191.

The CSO office is located at Level Five, 1 Farrell Place, Canberra. CSO staff work flexible hours – please call before visiting to ensure the office is staffed.

Communication with participants

Email will be the primary method of communication for program information, invoices and rehearsal and performance details. For participants under the age of 18, the email address provided to the CSO must be that of a parent or guardian. We request parents/ guardians regularly check email and share relevant information with students.

If contact details change, the CSO should be notified immediately.