



San Francisco Symphony Education Programs, 2025–26

The San Francisco Symphony serves its greater community with a comprehensive range of education programs, providing six consecutive years of music education for all students in San Francisco’s public elementary schools, and vital services for band programs, orchestra programs, and world music instrumental programs in San Francisco’s public middle schools and high schools—all free of charge. Throughout the Greater Bay Area, the San Francisco Symphony’s education programs provide opportunities for young people to engage with music through family-friendly performances and events; interactive concerts for school groups; resources for teachers, parents, and students; and the prestigious tuition-free San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra. Often singled out for both their quality and inclusivity, the SF Symphony’s education programs have been described by the *Wall Street Journal* as “the industry standard,” while *The New York Times* refers to the SF Symphony as “a music education powerhouse.”

Partnership with San Francisco Public Schools

A longstanding partnership with the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) provides in-school support to SF’s public schools, serving students throughout their elementary and secondary years, grades 1-12. The SFS provides these services at no cost to children or schools. The programs are ***Fisher Family Adventures in Music (AIM)*** and ***Music and Mentors***.

Fisher Family Adventures in Music

The **Adventures in Music (AIM)** program partners with San Francisco’s public schools to reach every first through fifth grader with comprehensive music education experiences. AIM launched in 1988 in partnership with the San Francisco Unified School District and ensures that every child in grades 1–5 in San Francisco’s elementary schools receives equitable access to music education for five consecutive years. Presented free of charge to schools, AIM offers an interdisciplinary program which integrates live music performances and related music-learning experiences with the everyday classroom curriculum. The program consists of in-school ensemble performances, tailored classroom materials and resources, professional development for teachers, and a private concert by the San Francisco Symphony at Davies Symphony Hall. The program introduces students to music of the world in addition to western classical music, and reflects the diverse cultural heritage of the city’s student population. All components of AIM are aligned with the Common Core Standards and integrate with core subject curriculum.



100% of students in grades 1–5 in the San Francisco Unified School District is served by Adventures in Music.

86% of children served by this program represent ethnic minorities

52% of children qualify for free or reduced-priced lunches

26% of children are English language learners

To learn more, visit

<https://www.sfsymphony.org/EducationCommunity/Education/Education-in-SF-Schools>

Music and Mentors



The impact of AIM and the resulting demand in music participation allowed the SFS to expand its programs for older students in grades 6–12. Through the Music and Mentors program, formerly called Instrument Training and Support, the Symphony supports every San Francisco public middle and high school band program, orchestra program, and world music instrumental program by offering weekly coaching and mentoring by SFS teaching artists in small sectionals, critical supplies and instrument repairs, and opportunities to attend Symphony open rehearsals and concerts at Davies Symphony Hall, all free of charge.

To learn more, visit <https://www.sfsymphony.org/EducationCommunity/Education/Education-in-SF-Schools>

Open Rehearsals



The San Francisco Symphony also provides Open Rehearsals for high school teachers and students, presenting behind-the-scenes encounters with the conductor and musicians, and offering the opportunity to hear orchestral music live. Open Rehearsals are preceded by informative talks, which begin an hour before each rehearsal.

For more information, visit
<https://www.sfsymphony.org/EducationCommunity/Education/School-Group-visits>

San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra



The San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra (SFSYO) is recognized as one of the finest youth orchestras in the world. Part of the Symphony's ongoing commitment to nurture young musicians, SFSYO participants are chosen from more than 300 applicants from the greater Bay Area through annual auditions and receive a pre-professional caliber and tuition-free orchestral experience. The Youth Orchestra has embarked on 11 international tours including appearances at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and Berliner Philharmonie, and released ten recordings including a live concert recording of Bartók's *The Miraculous Mandarin* at the Concertgebouw and Mahler Symphony No. 1 at the Berliner Philharmonie. The SFSYO rehearses and performs at Davies Symphony Hall under the direction of Wattis Foundation Music Director Radu Paponiu, and members of the orchestra are coached weekly by SFS musicians and have opportunities throughout each season to work with various esteemed visiting artists and conductors.

The Youth Orchestra performs four concerts in Davies Symphony Hall with Radu Paponiu during the 2025–26 season:

- **November 23:** Music by Johannes Brahms, Antonín Dvořák, Gabriela Ortiz, and Felix Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, featuring Aaron Ma, winner of the 2025 San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra Concerto Competition
- **December 14:** Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*
- **March 8:** Works by Jennifer Higdon, Gustav Mahler, and Jean Sibelius
- **May 17:** Music by Ludwig van Beethoven, Dylan Hall, and Dmitri Shostakovich

To learn more, visit <https://www.sfsymphony.org/EducationCommunity/SFS-Youth-Orchestra>

Music for Families



The popular Music for Families series for Bay Area families was launched in 1993 and is designed to introduce children and their parents to the wonders of live orchestral music. Part performance and part family outing, the series consists of matinee concerts designed to spark the imagination of the whole family through an exploration of different aspects of the orchestra and its repertoire. Music for Families concerts are designed to be educational, engaging, and fun. They include performances of great symphonic music, fascinating musical discoveries, and informative talks about the orchestra, the instruments, the musicians, and the music. Music for Families concerts are geared to

ages 5 and up.

In 2025–26, San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra Wattis Foundation Music Director Radu Paponiu leads the San Francisco Symphony in “Around the World Through Dance” on October 11, and Resident Conductor of Engagement and Education Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser conducts a program on February 14. For children ages 18 and under, tickets to these concerts, both on Saturday afternoons, are half price.

Free Online Resources for Kids, Families, and Teachers

The Symphony’s free online educational resources are created to offer children, adults, families, teachers, and schools opportunities to learn about music through interactivity, videos, and fun activities.

SFSKids.org - a music education resource for children 5-13

[SFSkids.org](https://www.sfsymphony.org/EducationCommunity/SFS-Kids)

Music Connects - Kids Edition

[San Francisco Symphony - Music Connects Kids \(sfsymphony.org\)](https://www.sfsymphony.org/EducationCommunity/MusicConnectsKids)

Instrument of the Month

[San Francisco Symphony - Instrument of the Month \(sfsymphony.org\)](https://www.sfsymphony.org/EducationCommunity/InstrumentoftheMonth)



Musical Heroes: Stories of African-American Composers



In February 2022, the San Francisco Symphony released a new educational resource, *Musical Heroes: Stories of African-American Composers*—an exploration of the life, work, and impact of Florence Price (1887-1953), William Grant Still (1895-1978), and George Walker (1922-2018), intended for students in middle school and high school classrooms and above.

Hosted by San Francisco Symphony Resident Conductor of Engagement and Education Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser, *Musical Heroes: Stories of African-American Composers* is a free, hour-long online resource available internationally. The video is divided into three chapters, each 12–15 minutes in length, focusing individually on Price, Still, and Walker, providing biographical information and historical context to their music. Each chapter is accompanied by a performance featuring San Francisco Symphony musicians—music from Price’s *Five Folksongs in Counterpoint*, Still’s *Serenade*, and Walker’s *Lyric for Strings*.

The *Musical Heroes* educational and performance videos are supplemented by a teacher’s guide with questions and related topics for classroom discussion—such as the Harlem Renaissance, operas by African-American composers, Jim Crow legislation, and the Civil Rights movement—and additional reading and recording recommendations to explore the composers and their music further.

To learn more, visit <https://www.sfsymphony.org/EducationCommunity/Musical-Heroes>

Photos by Stefan Cohen, Kim Huynh, and Brandon Patoc