

The National Youth Orchestra 2026

Applicant Information

Hello, we're delighted you're looking for more information about applying for the Orchestra of 2026. This information sheet provides you with the detail you need to apply for the Orchestra and to feel confident about your application and audition.

Why join NYO?

Open up your world when you join The National Youth Orchestra. Take on new ideas, meet new friends, visit new places and explore music like never before.

You will join a nationwide community of musicians who are just as passionate as you about orchestral music. You will experience every second of this musical adventure with them by your side, playing your part in shaping a welcoming environment for everyone to thrive.

You will reach new heights as a musician through coaching from NYO's world-class musical and support teams. This will give you the confidence to conquer huge musical challenges.

Play massive orchestral masterworks and stunning ensemble music, whilst exploring new musical concepts and the work of a diverse range of composers.

You will perform with and for teenagers across the UK. With the guidance of leading creative innovators, you'll find new ways to perform and present the music you love, in concert halls, schools and surprising spaces and places.

What does it mean to play my part?

There is a big part to play in the Orchestra. You are a Musician. You will take on the role of Motivator and Mentor. You will become a Changemaker for your generation.

You will develop confidence by motivating other people your age through the power of orchestral music. You will inspire other teenagers by performing epic masterworks and cutting-edge orchestral music.

You'll use those experiences as a springboard to take on the role of musical mentor for other teenagers. Acting as a mentor on the NYO Inspire programme, in schools, workshops and in your local community.

Everyone in the Orchestra is on their own musical and personal journey to becoming a Changemaker for their generation. It's time to get started. It's time to play your part.

Who can apply for The Orchestra?

Is music your passion? Are looking to take on a new challenge? Then it's time to play your part in the greatest musical adventure of your life and apply to join the Orchestra.

We are recruiting musicians who play orchestral instruments: violin, viola, cello, double bass, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, french horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba, orchestral percussion, harp and orchestral keyboard. You can apply for more than one instrument if you want to by selecting up to two instruments in your application.

If you play an orchestral instrument at an advanced level, we want to hear from you. Musicians will usually be playing at a level equivalent to Grade 8, but with no need for graded exams.

To apply you should be 13–18 years old, a British citizen or alternatively you can be living or studying in the UK.

We welcome applications from musicians at secondary school, sixth form college, university and from those who are home-schooled. We are not able to accept applications from those studying full-time at a college of music, or on a joint course with a college of music.

What does a year in the Orchestra look like?

Imagine taking your seat in this cutting-edge orchestra, performing in amazing spaces and surprising places across the UK. Every moment is an opportunity to be inspired by the awesome people around you.

It's a challenge but we'll support you every step of the way. It takes serious preparation and it's seriously rewarding. NYO musicians take their seat in the Orchestra for the year, starting in October all the way through to August.

It's 40+ days of live activity including three full residencies and three nationwide tours. You'll join together with NYO musicians from your local area as part of NYO

NYO guide for NYO 2026 applicants

Unite, perform in schools, take part in workshops and take your passion for music back to your local community as part of NYO Local. Most of this activity happens during school holidays and occasionally at the weekends giving you plenty of time to play your part.

NYO musicians need to be available for all residencies and concert tours and at least one day at NYO Unite in October. Musicians will also need to play their part as role models in up to three days of NYO Inspire activity. You'll be asked to be available for as many dates as possible so that we can plan the best experience for you.

Here are our outline dates for 2026. Please note that not everyone will be required for the dates in italics:

<i>NYO Unite</i>	<i>October 2025 (one day)</i>
Winter residency & concert tour	28 December 2025 – 8 January 2026
<i>NYO Inspire Activity</i>	<i>February 2026 (three days)</i>
<i>NYO Open Schools Concert & Workshops</i>	<i>February 2026 (four days)</i>
Spring residency & concert tour	29 March – 12 April 2026 (TBC)
<i>NYO Inspire Orchestra</i>	<i>July 2026 (ten days)</i>
NYO Local	Summer term (musician led – one day)
Summer residency & concert tour	26 July – 8 August 2026

How do I join?

It's free to apply and audition for NYO. We start from scratch every year so that we can build an orchestra of the UK's most motivated teenage musicians. It's a competitive process, but you'll be supported and receive feedback every step of the way.

To apply you need to fill in an application form via [musicians' portal](#) and upload your first-round video audition through your specific instrument excerpts which you can find [here](#). Simply log in if you've already got an account or create a new one if this is your first time using the musicians' portal. Your application will then be reviewed by our musical team.

Successful candidates are invited to an in-person final round assessment day. You'll play music with other musicians, take part in discussions and workshops and play your pieces and excerpts to the audition panel.

NYO guide for NYO 2026 applicants

For your video audition and for the solo audition part of your final round assessment day, you will need to prepare a solo piece (or pieces), and orchestral excerpts.

Please note, NYO 2025 Musicians, NYO Alumni, NYO Associates and Guests who played in an NYO concert do not need to upload a video.

The whole process starts in March and culminates in September – see the timeline below.

NYO applications open	10 March 2025
Application deadline	09.00 19 May 2025
First Round video audition upload deadline	End of 15 June 2025
First round results emailed by	15 July 2025
Final Round Assessment Days	4-15 September 2025
Final Round Assessment Day results emailed by	26 September 2025

What is the cost of auditioning for NYO?

First round video auditions are free – we offer free feedback and suggest further opportunities (why not give it a go!).

Final round assessment days are free and supported by travel and accommodation bursaries for those who need them. Please email orchestra@nyo.org.uk for more information.

What is the cost of a place in the Orchestra?

We invest over £10,000 in each NYO musician every year. For NYO 2026 we expect to ask each musician to contribute £2,499 towards this cost (current figure at March 2025). We work with our supporter community to help raise the rest.

NYO musicians will not be turned away on financial grounds. We understand that for some the level of contribution may be out of reach. Don't give up now, we want to hear about what you need: our bursary scheme is generous, considering both means and expenditure, aiming to help with some, or all, of the contribution. We can also guide you in applying to other organisations for funding help.

Those musicians invited to be part of NYO 2026 join a large community of supporters who champion young musicians and help fund your development in the orchestra. We ask you to make your contribution at the beginning of the year, which enables us to plan and widen the scope to include many more young musicians who need opportunities. We also offer a six-month instalment plan.

As an NYO musician you will have a role in engaging with and thanking our nationwide community of supporters.

What music do I need to perform?

For your video audition and for the solo audition part of your final round assessment day, you will need to prepare a solo piece (or pieces), and orchestral excerpts.

Solo Pieces

Strings, wind, harp, and orchestral keyboard players

- Please perform **two solo pieces** of your own choice.
- We ask that you play two contrasting works by different composers, to highlight what you are capable of as a musician: your technique, your musicianship and what you love to play.
- At both first and final round, the panel will stop you after around **three minutes** of each piece, so if you'd like them to hear a particular section of the piece, please make cuts accordingly.
- You do not need to play with piano accompaniment for your video audition, but if you'd like to, you are welcome to. At final round, your pieces must be performed unaccompanied but don't need to have been written as an unaccompanied work.
- If you're offered a final round audition, you can play the same pieces you performed at first round or something different.

Brass players

- Please perform **one solo piece** of your own choice of around four-six minutes of playing in total.
- Choose something that highlights what you are capable of as a musician: your technique, your musicianship, and what you love to play.
- You do not need to play with piano accompaniment for your video audition, but if you'd like to, you are welcome to. At final round, your piece must be performed unaccompanied but doesn't need to have been written as an unaccompanied work.
- At final & single round you can play the same piece you performed at first round or something different.

Percussion players

- Please perform **one solo piece** of your own choice on xylophone, marimba or vibraphone, of around four-six minutes of playing in total.
- Choose something that highlights what you are capable of as a musician: your technique, your musicianship, and what you love to play.
- At final & single round you can play the same piece you performed at first round or something different.

Excerpts

Orchestral excerpts are an important part of your auditions and are chosen so that you can demonstrate your exploration and understanding of orchestral musicianship. They also enable the panel to establish how players of differing standards address the technical and musical challenges in the same repertoire.

You can find each instrument's orchestral excerpts [here](#). You will need a **password**: this is NYO2026Excerpts.

Our top tips for preparing excerpts? Listen to multiple performances of the excerpts, so that you understand the orchestral context of the excerpts, work on them with your teacher, or other musicians you know, just as you would your pieces. And listen to other pieces from the same composer to widen your knowledge of their writing for your instrument and their style.

What happens after I apply?

After you've completed your application by 9am on 19 May, you need to submit your video audition online by end of 15 June. We will let you know the outcome of your first-round application and if we would like to invite you to a final round assessment day by 15 July 2025.

Our final round assessment days are designed to help you showcase who you are as a musician, and who you are as a person, in a welcoming environment. You will have the opportunity to show us your skills as a musician, meet and play music with others and tell us about your passion for music. The final round assessment days are more than a chance for you to audition in person, they're designed to offer you a fulfilling music-making experience.

Final round assessment days will be held between 4-15 September 2025 in London and Manchester. Percussion and some string auditions will take place in Birmingham. Harp auditions will take place in Reading. You can let us know about any availability issues in your application.

If you're offered a place in the Orchestra following the assessment days, you will be asked to confirm your commitment to taking part in all three NYO orchestral residencies, tour dates and performances, and up to 7 days of NYO Inspire activity.

If you are not offered a place this time, it doesn't mean your journey with NYO stops there. The community of the Orchestra expands beyond the 160 musicians who will take their seat in NYO 2026. NYO Associates and Guest musicians play their

part too by broadening their musical experience side by side with the Orchestra, on residencies and through performance.

Musicians who are eligible will be automatically considered for NYO Inspire so that we can continue to invest in your progression. NYO Inspire is a free musical adventure for teenagers who want to make music a bigger part of their lives but face lack of opportunities to progress. The programme supports musicians to take their playing to the next level.

NYO Inspire musicians work closely with NYO musicians during orchestral and ensemble projects throughout the year, developing musically and creatively together. You can find out more about NYO Inspire and eligibility [here](#).

What if I want to withdraw?

NYO is a charitable organisation and fundraises in order to provide free auditions for everyone. We understand that everyone's situation can change but please consider the impact of this when thinking about withdrawing your application, particularly if you have been offered a final round assessment day. To withdraw, please email orchestra@nyo.org.uk to let us know. It's really helpful for us if you can give us a reason, too.

If you withdraw from your audition, we will ask for a donation of £150 to cover the cost of your unused audition so we can ensure teenage musicians can continue to have free auditions in the future. When you submit your application, you are agreeing to these terms.

The nitty gritty: application & video audition

Create your NYO online account in our Musicians' Portal:

- Visit <https://musicians.nyo.org.uk/>
- Click 'Create Account' or sign straight in if you already have one.
- Choose whether you want to apply for The Orchestra or for NYO Inspire.

Completing the application

- You will need to work through the online form.
- **Make sure you save each section** before you move on. You can come back to it at a later stage before submitting if you would like to.

Parent / Carer

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There are some questions that you may need your parents or carers to help you with, including household income. We ask this information so that we are able to statistically report back to the Arts Council and other high-level funders. This is done anonymously. We may also use this data when 'matching' individual musicians with particular strands of funding that we receive.

Video audition: technical guidelines

We love watching your video auditions and seeing your passion for orchestral music radiate the screen! In order for us to assess each video accurately, it's vitally important that we can see you clearly on screen, in a bright-lit space, positioned centrally on camera with yourself and your instrument clearly visible.

Preparing a video audition can feel like a daunting prospect, but remember, we want you to showcase your love for orchestral music and gain a deeper insight into you as a person and as a performer. Our most important tip is to relax and enjoy the process. It can be easy to feel the need to record multiple takes of each piece, but try to treat it like a 'live' performance by practising and working hard and then aiming for your best effort.

Make sure you watch our preparation videos at the bottom of [this link](#) for more hints and tips!

The main technical points:

- You do not have to play your pieces and excerpts in one take. You can edit together each element, or you can upload each section separately.
- You can film your audition using a handheld device such as a phone, tablet or via a laptop or desktop computer.
- When filming and recording, you should use only the internal microphone on your device. **Please do not use any external microphones.**
- Videos should be presented in their original form and not subject to any sound enhancement.
- Videos should be recorded indoors, in landscape view if possible.
- We want to offer support to those who don't have the equipment or technology. If you need help, please email us at orchestra@nyo.org.uk

How to film your video

- **Camera angle** - please be in the middle of the shot and face the camera. You and a large proportion of your instrument(s) should be clearly visible.
 - String players should try to have as much of your fingerboard in view, and then all the way down to your bridge in view so we can see your bow.

- Wind and brass players should try to have their face and embouchure visible and not hidden by the instrument of bell.
- **Lighting** – try using natural light (face a window if possible) or turn on a lamp and place it behind your camera. This will provide good lighting without casting too much shadow.
- **Background** – film your video in an empty or uncluttered background if possible. Make sure that your bed and personal belongings are not visible on video for safeguarding purposes.
- **Sound** – please ensure you film your video in a quiet setting. Recording indoors in a closed room usually projects better sound quality.
- **Checking before recording** – using the tips above, don't forget to test it out, check if you are happy with everything before doing the full take.
- **Start and end of a recording** – make sure that when you start and end your video, you leave a little pause so that it does not cut out the video.

How to upload your video

Saving your video(s)

Once you have recorded your video(s) please save them in the following format:

- **First name, SURNAME – Instrument – Video** description (i.e. Complete video, Introduction, Solo piece, Excerpt 1, etc.)
- Please include the name of the piece.
- If you have recorded your videos on a handheld device and are struggling to rename your video, it is often easier to email it to yourself (using [WeTransfer.com](https://www.wetransfer.com) if it is a large file), rename it on a computer and submit it from there.

Uploading your video(s)

- Upload your video(s) via the instrument-specific upload link, which you can find on your excerpts document.
- You will be able to select single or multiple files to upload direct from your computer.
- This may take a while depending on the size of your files. We advise being connected to WiFi.
- You will see that it's uploaded, but you won't receive any confirmation email from Dropbox. Please be reassured that if you have applied and we don't chase you for your video, we have received it!

If you are having difficulties uploading your video(s), please email us on orchestra@nyo.org.uk.

Any further questions?

Please email the team on orchestra@nyo.org.uk.