

## Adjust - Adapt - Persevere

TYSA cancelled rehearsals on March 7 for the first time due to Covid-19. At the time, many of us didn't realize the seriousness of this virus and both the Artistic and Administrative staff hoped to be back to in-person rehearsals within a few weeks. Within days of that cancellation, the Governor shut down in-person learning at all schools in Washington State for six weeks (later for the rest of the school year) and shortly after, issued a mandatory stay at home order for all non-essential workers. Now, seven months later, we have all learned to adjust as we have faced shortages of everything from toilet paper to pasta. Face masks have now become the most important fashion accessory.

Over the last seven months TYSA has learned to use newer technologies to hold virtual rehearsals, record virtual performances and to keep our students connected and learning. There have been bumps along the way but there have also been great successes, like the two virtual sessions of the Evergreen Music Festival and the recent masterclasses with Midori. For this season, we have adopted the motto "Adjust-Adapt-Persevere." To explore what that means, we asked our conductors, several TYSA students and a TYSA parent what their greatest challenges have been in adapting to this new virtual format, what they have enjoyed most, some successes that they have experienced and how their involvement with music has helped them through these difficult times. Their answers are below.

From Music Director, Dr. Paul-Elliott Cobbs: "When things don't go the way you planned you can either shut down or adjust, improvise and move forward. Confronting obstacles is a fact of life. You may choose to simply stop, or you may seek creative solutions to go through the obstacles, around them or over them. To that end, the TYSA staff has taken advantage of new technological opportunities to create a musical learning format that has, heretofore, never been used anywhere in the world.

When I was a conducting student at the Academy for Music in Vienna, Austria, my conducting professor told me "keep the music in your head and not your head in the music." That lesson has served me well. During each TYSA rehearsal I tend to watch the musicians, since the score is memorized. I find that some students have a huge smile, some take a more business like approach and a few need to practice more. In any

case, I have a good idea how each student is doing. That experience is gone for now, and I miss it.

TYSA students have invested years of hard work to reach the high level of musicianship they presently possess. However, a year without consistent effort would cause a definite setback. In our virtual rehearsals anyone has the capacity of leading the orchestra and must be musically prepared to do so. Also, when all are muted except the Tuba, for example, everyone now hears the Tuba part as they are playing their own. More than ever, people are listening across the orchestra, hearing (and also seeing) instruments that may have been ignored in the past.

Life will consistently present challenges. Dealing with the Covid-19 Virus pandemic will not be the last challenge our students face. It can however, serve as a lesson in how to deal with tragedy in the future... **Adapt-Adjust-Persevere.** It is our sincere hope that the joy of music-making will help every TYSA family come through this difficult time with a renewed spirit and hope for the future.

Be safe and be kind!"

Dr. Anna Jensen, Conductor of the Tacoma String Symphony and Tacoma String Philharmonia, had this to say: "The greatest challenge has been learning all of the technology and learning it extremely well. The students are eager and ready to go, so the conductors have to be incredibly quick and fast-thinking to keep up with our amazing students in virtual rehearsals!

I've SO enjoyed being with the students again and to see them working hard and having fun! The students' smiles and energy has kept me going through this whole thing.

One of the greatest successes for me was EMF Session I at the end of day one. That was the moment that I realized that we can still be together, make music, learn, and build friendships. Even though our current format is not the same as in-person, we are finding new ways to keep the music alive and well at TYSA. There are a few advantages in Zoom that I will miss once we are back in-person...the students can send me private messages at any point in Zoom to tell me a spot that might be hard and that they need help or even a message that says 'I did it! It's getting better!'

I have not been able to perform on my instrument since COVID-19 hit. I thought I would miss having an almost daily part of my life taken

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away; however, I never stopped teaching music. Teaching music has kept me busy and engaged this entire time. The energy from my students has brought me countless joys during this time and they are what keeps things 'normal' for me. I'm always excited to see them!"

Elizabeth Ward is the Assistant Conductor for the Tacoma Young Artists/Tacoma Junior Youth Symphony hybrid orchestra and conductor of the Brass Ensemble. This is what she said: "My greatest challenge is continually having to adapt... I can't change anything! Only accepting these conditions and continually trying to remain flexible are my goals.

In the virtual format, I am lost most of the time. The good thing about this is that I am learning each and every day. I am fortunate that at TYSA there are people who willingly and generously give their support and share their knowledge.

My greatest joys and successes have come from the students themselves. Our students have been wonderful in helping guide me through those virtual crises moments and showing patience during our sessions. I know, when we come back for live rehearsals we will be better as people and musicians. All of us have had to learn to know ourselves better; that is a big deal!

Through the pandemic or really anytime in my life music seems to be at my core...listening, rehearsing, or performing music is where I live!"

French horn player, Evan Minsk, has been a member of TYSA since he was in middle school. Now as a student at the Cornish School for the Arts in Seattle, he is continuing as a member of the Tacoma Youth Symphony. He said this about TYSA's virtual format: "It is a challenge to stay engaged during rehearsals. When I'm at home there are so many little things to distract me. Getting to rehearsal on time is also challenging, but that is no different than before.

We get to play some of the greatest orchestral repertoire ever written. Jeanne Baxtresser in her orchestral excerpts video on YouTube says that "the *Leonore Overture No. 3* is probably one of the greatest orchestral pieces ever written." The *Firebird Suite* is also one of the greatest works of the Twentieth Century.

The masterclass with players from the Tacoma Symphony was very effective. An added benefit was that I was the only person in the masterclass, so it was a private lesson. The masterclass teacher showed tricks to make passages easier and then gave advice of what imagery to think about for the last excerpt. That was very effective teaching over Zoom.

I think that music is really hard and demands a lot from you physically and mentally. Therefore, when you're playing music, often there is little space for outside negativity to distract you from the present moment."

Madeline Markham also became a member of TYSA at an early age. A violinist in the Tacoma Youth Symphony this year, she is a senior at Curtis High School. These are her thoughts about the current situation: "The greatest challenge for me in adapting to this new virtual format has been the inability to play with everyone at the same time and get the timing right. In rehearsals, one of the most helpful things for me is hearing the entire orchestra to perfect our timing and to perfect where my part fits in. This is much more difficult to do online.

What I've enjoyed most is doing the activities each week such as favorite composer and Hawaiian day. Despite this new format, I love how we are able to connect and see everyone somehow each week.

Playing with the recordings a lot has been extremely beneficial for me. I didn't do that very often until we began the online format. Although it's not the same as playing with a live orchestra, it does help me figure out how things are supposed to sound and which sections I need to isolate while practicing.

Music has certainly been a life saver for me during these difficult times. Seeing the recordings made by symphonies all around the world gives me hope and comfort that musicians know how to stick together and makes things work no matter the circumstances. I also love the new motto "Adjust, Adapt and Persevere". I believe that during these times, so many musicians have been doing just that, and making the best out of this situation."

Yukino Sokolik is a violinist in the Tacoma String Philharmonia. She is a sixth grader at Chinook Middle School. She said this: "The greatest challenge, I would say, is the trouble with technical difficulties. Everything going well centers on your computer; if your computer does not take signals from your microphone, you can't talk. There are many ways online learning can go wrong.

Online symphony can also be fun, but my favorite part of symphony online is playing music. Even though the symphony is online we can still play music. I really enjoy playing music. Even though it's online, it's still as fun as if it were in person. My involvement in TSP has kept me, busy of course, but also happy and sane.

I didn't think I'd be in TSP this year because of Covid, but because I do get to be in TSP I have something to do other than school, and other activities. Tacoma Youth Symphony has really kept me from being depressed; I make lots of friends and have lots of fun playing my instrument with other people. The fact that I can have fun and be happy during symphony keeps me from going insane."

The Rayray family was new to TYSA last season. Zia is a cellist this year in the Tacoma String Philharmonia. Her Dad, Dick, gave us a parent's perspective on both the challenges and benefits of participating in TYSA virtually. "Like everyone else, not having any in person contact is hard. Outside of TYSA, Zia has a new school orchestra instructor and switched her private teacher to more of a dedicated cello specialist. I'm mentioning this because, being online – the little specific things you would normally see in person get missed. We went into the school for an in person teacher conference. During 20 minutes, we worked on her posture (including wrapping her feet around the chair), bow hold and height/angle of her cello to help balance weight distribution. Her teacher said normally this would take all year to correct, but Zia addressed all of this within 5-10 minutes. Also, she said that her strings were worn out and needed replacing. I KNOW all of these would have been addressed if she was in person.

We do have some issues that are technology related. Even though we have a fairly stable internet connection, there are moments when content is sporadic with dropouts from time to time. The hardest part is not getting to hear each other to see if they are synchronized or playing at the same tempo. We're having to rely on the metronome apps more and more. We also try to get to know all the other students in her section. While we were in person, both Zia and I knew all the cellists by name (and the 2 violas that sat next to her). I was known as "Zia's Dad." Now she can only name the few who she met last year.

This actually started last season, but we've enjoyed the mini lessons with Dr. Jensen the most. Being able to have the dedicated individual time was invaluable.

Having EMF online was the BEST part of Zia's summer. She missed playing music and listening to others so much. We were so grateful to Dr. Jensen to allow her to attend both sessions since she was right at that age of do we send her to Session I or Session II? Zia enjoyed the 2<sup>nd</sup> session more even though she was challenged the entire time and at times struggled to keep up.

Also having the additional opportunities such as the Midori Master Class opens up another world for these students. This would probably not have happened if it wasn't for the pandemic. It allowed many students to attend (plus highlight a few to participate/play)."

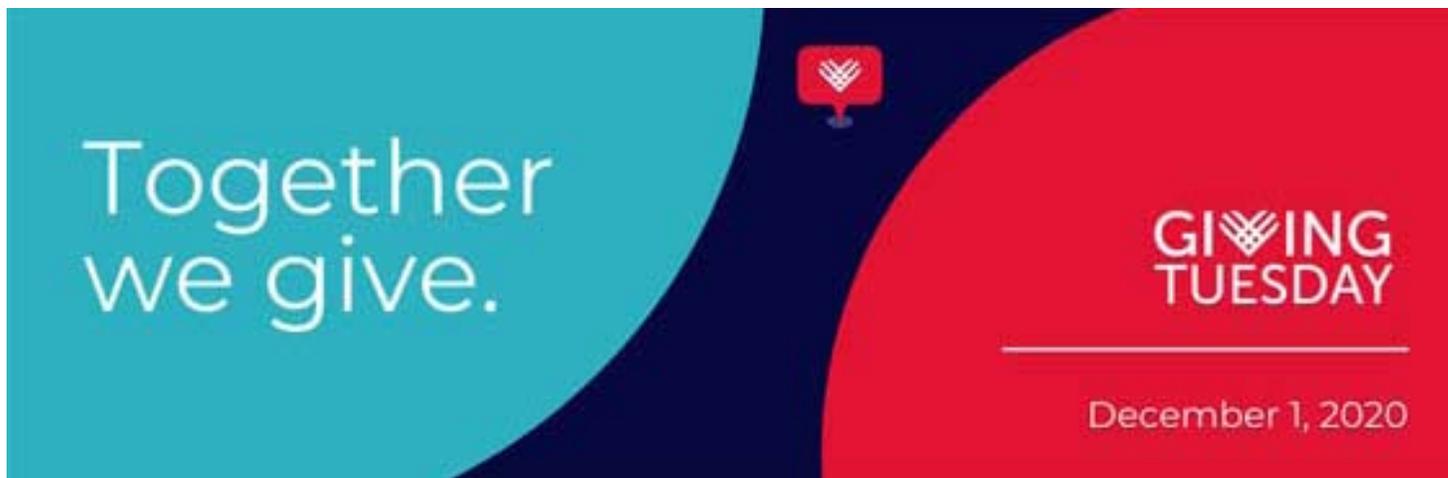


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There are lots of **new items**, including sweatpants, decals, pajama bottoms, masks and the NEW 2020 ADJUST-ADAPT-PERSEVERE hoodies!

These make great gifts--orders will be available before the holidays. Support the Tacoma Youth Symphony Association while showing your musical spirit!

Go to <https://www.companycasuals.com/TYSAmusic/start.jsp> to order yours today!



## Giving Tuesday – December 1

You have probably heard of Giving Tuesday. It was created 8 years ago to help connect organizations with donors. It has quickly grown into a global phenomenon. Giving Tuesday is an opportunity for people around the world to stand together in unity – to use their individual power of generosity to remain connected and heal. This December 1 will be the first time the Tacoma Youth Symphony Association participates in Giving Tuesday. Join us as we participate this year! Further details about our campaign will be available as we get closer through weekly emails and on the TYSA Facebook page. Also, check out <https://event.auctria.com/5812365b-eb37-4155-a0d3-8b621bc86ad6/> to make your donation today.

Have you checked out the TYSA YouTube channel?

The YouTube channel started last spring with the Tacoma Youth Symphony's virtual performance of the final movement of Mendelssohn's *Symphony No. 5 (Reformation)*. Since, we have added virtual season finales for the Tacoma Junior Youth Symphony, Tacoma String Philharmonia and Tacoma String Symphony as well as virtual performances from both sessions of the Evergreen Music Festival, an interview with Dr. Anna Jensen, a slideshow of pictures from past Costume Concerts and a recent performance of this season's TYS Beethoven Quartet. In addition a virtual performance of this season's Costume Concert will be coming soon. Go to <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCeWpVJHWqbmU1Wr3K2-tXQ> to check out these great performances today!



Do you “like” us? We post pictures, TYSA news, concert information and more on our Facebook page. Check us out at [facebook.com/TacomaYouthSymphonyAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/TacomaYouthSymphonyAssociation)

## Concert Information

Normally in the A Tempo we list all of the concerts for the season and highlight the ones that are coming up immediately. At this uncertain time, however, we don’t know when we will be able to host in-person concerts. All of the concerts for the season are listed on the website where we will also keep you updated on the status of concerts. There is also ticket information on the website and you can purchase tickets through the TYSA website two weeks before each live performance. Check out the TYSA website for all concert and ticket information today at [www.tysamusic.org](http://www.tysamusic.org).

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