

# CKYO Board Reports: 2025–2026 Season Summary



## President's Welcome and Overview Kirsten Clingerman

- The Board of Directors continued to prioritize long-term sustainability, organizational accessibility, and strategic planning during the 2025–2026 season.
- CKYO experienced continued artistic and programmatic growth across its ensembles and educational initiatives, serving students and families throughout Central Kentucky.
- The organization continued to navigate broader challenges facing arts nonprofits, including rising operational costs and changing funding environments, while maintaining a strong commitment to financial stewardship and mission-focused planning.
- Board leadership remained focused on balancing fiscal responsibility with ongoing investment in:
  - Artistic excellence
  - Student opportunity
  - Educational programming
  - Community impact
- CKYO's programs continued to provide students with opportunities to develop:
  - Musical skills and performance experience
  - Leadership and teamwork
  - Discipline and personal responsibility
  - Confidence and meaningful peer connections
- The organization strengthened community partnerships and continued efforts to expand access to high-quality music education opportunities.
- Appreciation was expressed to CKYO's conductors, teaching artists, staff, volunteers, families, donors, sponsors, and community partners for their continued support and service to the organization.
- As CKYO prepares for its 80th anniversary season in 2027–2028, the organization has begun placing increased emphasis on long-term legacy planning and future sustainability efforts.
- Planned giving initiatives, including legacy gifts and Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs), were identified as important components of CKYO's future development strategy.
- The organization continued efforts to strengthen alumni engagement and encourage broader community involvement through:
  - Volunteerism
  - Advocacy
  - Fundraising support
  - Committee participation
  - Leadership development and future Board service
- Alumni outreach efforts included the launch and promotion of an alumni survey designed to:
  - Reconnect former members with the organization
  - Update alumni contact information
  - Expand mentorship and engagement opportunities
  - Support future anniversary and alumni initiatives
- CKYO concluded the season with strong community support and continued optimism regarding the organization's future growth, impact, and sustainability.

### LINKS MENTIONED:

- Alumni survey: [www.ckyo.org/alumni-urvey](http://www.ckyo.org/alumni-urvey)
- Get Involved: [www.ckyo.org/get-involved](http://www.ckyo.org/get-involved)
- Planned Giving/Support: [www.ckyo.org/legacy](http://www.ckyo.org/legacy)



**Executive Director Report**  
**Amelia Groetsch**

**CKYO's Donors and Contributors:** Click [HERE](#)

**CKYO's program sponsors:** <https://www.ckyo.org/programsponsors>

***CKYO 2025-2026 By the Numbers (August 2025 registration)***

**Audition Based Orchestras**

Symphony Orchestra - 92  
Concert Orchestra - 65  
Repertory Orchestra - 67  
Bravo String Orchestra - 40  
Jazz Arts Orchestra - 16  
Jazz Repertory Orchestra - 10  
Percussion – 9

**Friends in Music**

Middle Schoolers - 95  
High School Mentors - 42

**MusicWorks**

Strings – 28  
Clarinets – 12

***2025-2026 Season Mainstage Performances***

November 16, 2025 at Singletary Center for the Arts  
February 15, 2026 at Singletary Center for the Arts  
May 13 2026 at Singletary Center for the Arts  
May 17, 2026 at Singletary Center for the Arts  
May 12, 2026 at Singletary Center for the Arts

***2025-2026 Community Program Performances***

November 13, 2025 – Friends in Music – Leestown Recital  
November 18, 2025 – Friends in Music – Bryan Station Recital  
December 13, 2025 – MusicWorks Holiday Concert  
April 1, 2026 – Friends in Music – Bryan Station Recital  
April 3, 2026 – Friends in Music – Leestown Recital  
May 13, 2026 – MusicWorks Spring Concert for Families and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Program at William Wells Brown Elementary School  
May 17, 2026 – Friends in Music Side-by-Side performance at CKYO Season Finale  
May 18 & 20, 2026 – Friends in Music – Awards and Celebration

***2025-2026 Special Events and Performances (small ensembles or partial ensembles)***

September 7, 2025 – Concert for Lexington with LexPhil (250Lex) commission preview with Uniting Voices Lexington)  
September 22, 2025 – Sacred Music Festival – Vivaldi Gloria with FCPS High Schools  
November 9, 2025 – CKYO Concerto Competition at Singletary Center for the Arts  
April 4 2026 – Big Band Blast (featuring Jazz Arts Orchestra, UK Jazz Ensemble, Bluegrass Area Jazz Association) at Singletary Center for the Arts  
April 17, 2026 - LexPhill – Discovery Concert Lobby performance  
April Headley Whitney Opening Reception performance  
May 9, 2026 – CKYO Percussion performs with Lexington Chamber Orchestra

***2026 Audition Info Tabling Events***

Middle School Honors Band at ECU  
Middle School Honors Band (District 7) at Frederick Douglass High School  
Middle School Honors Orchestra (District 7) at Bryan Station High School

Winburn Middle School Orchestra Concert  
Jessie Clark Middle School Orchestra Concert  
Beaumont Middle School Band Concert  
EJ Hayes Middle School Band Concert  
SCAPA Bluegrass Band Concert  
Woodford County 5<sup>th</sup> grade, Middle, and High School Orchestra Concert  
Bryan Station Middle School Orchestra Concert  
Bryan Station High School Orchestra Concert  
Mary E Britton Middle School Orchestra Concert

### ***Audition Visits + Workshops by CKYO Conductors***

Henry Clay High School Orchestra  
Lafayette High School Orchestra  
Bryan Station High School Orchestra  
Morton Middle School Orchestra  
Tates Creek Middle School Orchestra  
Winburn Middle School Orchestra  
Bryan Station Middle School Orchestra  
Lexington Middle School Orchestra  
Mary E. Britton Middle School Orchestra  
Jessie Clark Middle School Orchestra  
Madison Middle School Band  
Madison Central High School Band  
Winburn Middle School Band  
Tates Creek Middle School Band  
Jessie Clark Middle School Band  
EJ Hayes Middle School Band

### **Music Director Report**

#### **Marcello Cormio**

##### Artistic Vision & Student Growth

- The 2025–2026 season emphasized artistic ambition, collaboration, and musical growth.
- Across all ensembles, students were challenged to:
  - Listen more deeply
  - Perform more bravely
  - Engage with increasingly advanced repertoire and artistic expectations
- Significant musical growth was evident across ensembles from September through May.

##### 250Lex Commission & Community Collaboration

- CKYO participated in one of the organization's most significant recent artistic projects through Lexington's 250th anniversary celebration.
- Collaborated with more than 250 Fayette County Public Schools high school choir students.
- Presented We the People: Anthem for the 250th Anniversary of Lexington, Kentucky:
  - Original music by William C. White
  - Original poetry by Lexington native Deidra White
- Work was previewed at the LexPhil Concert for Lexington in September and fully premiered during CKYO's Season Opening Concert.
- Project highlighted the power of large-scale community partnerships and original artistic creation.

##### Sacred Music Festival Participation

- CKYO participated in Lexington's inaugural Sacred Music Festival.

- Symphony Orchestra performed Gloria by Antonio Vivaldi alongside Fayette County high school choirs.
- Continued CKYO's participation in Lexington's 250th anniversary activities.
- Reinforced the value of collaborative artistic experiences for students.

#### Concerto Competition

- Three student soloists were selected as winners of the annual Concerto Competition:
  - Rio Kawashima — violin
  - James Weitkamp — French horn
  - Miriam Farley — cello
- Winners performed with Symphony Orchestra during Teen Arts Concerts.
- Competition continues to provide high-level artistic opportunities and pre-professional performance experience.

#### Featured Guest Artist

- Welcomed Dr. Sherry Baker as featured soloist with Repertory Orchestra.
- Dr. Baker:
  - CKYO alumna
  - Former CKYO parent
  - Band Director at Winburn Middle School
- Performed Morceau de Concert by Camille Saint-Saëns.
- Her participation reflected CKYO's long-term impact and alumni connections.

#### Looking Ahead

- Continued artistic collaborations and community partnerships are planned for Season 79.
- Early planning is underway for a unique performance opportunity at the Kentucky Horse Park.

## Finance Committee Report

**Louise Shouse, Chair**

### Financial Overview

- 2025–2026 was **artistically successful but financially challenging**
- Beginning cash balance (July 1, 2025): **\$79,263**
- Projected ending cash balance (June 30, 2026): **~\$7,200**
- Cash flow needs supported through transfers from **Baird investment account**

### Current Year Financial Snapshot

- **Projected Revenue: \$474,000**
- **Projected Expenses: \$531,000**
- **Projected Operating Loss: (\$57,000)**

### Primary factors impacting finances:

- Inflationary increases in expenses
  - Health insurance
  - Venue rental costs
- Decreases in:
  - Grant funding
  - General operating support

### **Successes This Year**

- ✓ Increased ticket sales revenue
- ✓ Increased audition-based tuition revenue
- ✓ Strong participation in:
  - Friends in Music
  - MusicWorks
- ✓ Endowment support received from:
  - Brown Endowment
  - MusicWorks Endowment at Blue Grass Community Foundation
- ✓ Maintained advertising sponsorships
- ✓ Retained outstanding staff and artistic leadership

### **Tuition & Access**

- Orchestra tuition covers approximately **65% of actual program costs**
- CKYO continues its longstanding commitment:
  - Students who successfully audition are eligible for financial assistance if needed
- Additional family donations help support student scholarships and access
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### **Looking Ahead: 2026–2027 Proposed Budget**

- **Projected Revenue: \$474,250**
- **Projected Expenses: \$490,694**
- **Projected Operating Deficit: (\$16,444)**

### **Budget approach:**

- Revenue projections based on historically achievable goals
- Fixed costs remain significant:
  - Salaries
  - Benefits
  - Facilities
- Discretionary spending carefully managed

### **Priorities for 2026–2027**

- Continue strong audition recruitment efforts
- Expand alumni engagement
- Increase grant and corporate support
- Grow individual giving
- Develop collaborative performances with arts partners
- Continue MusicWorks at William Wells Brown Elementary
- Expand clarinet programming

### **Board Commitment**

Balance long-term sustainability with artistic excellence, access, and opportunity for all students.

## **Fundraising Committee Report**

### **Amy Smith, Chair**

- CKYO continued to rely on broad community support to sustain programs and keep participation accessible for students and families.
- Fundraising remains essential in bridging the gap between tuition revenue and the true cost of operating CKYO's ensembles and community programs.
  - Tuition covers approximately 64–65% of the actual cost of participation for students in audition-based ensembles.
  - Remaining support comes from:
    - Donations
    - Grants
    - Sponsorships
    - Fundraising initiatives
    - Volunteer efforts
- CKYO saw strong support across a variety of fundraising activities this season, including:
  - Bluegrass Gives campaign
    - Engaged hundreds of donors
    - Generated important matching funds and challenge grant support
  - Family-supported fundraising efforts:
    - Flower sales
    - Bingo volunteer shifts
    - HundredX surveys
    - Sponsorship outreach
    - Program advertising
    - Other fundraising initiatives throughout the year
- CKYO also continued receiving valuable support from:
  - Local businesses
  - Foundations
  - Community sponsors
  - Organizations and individuals who recognize the importance of arts education and youth development in Central Kentucky
- Fundraising efforts directly supported:
  - Tuition assistance for students and families
  - Free participation in MusicWorks
  - Scholarships and community access programs
  - Artistic programming and guest artist opportunities
  - Instrument and operational needs across the organization
- Looking ahead, the Fundraising Committee will continue focusing on:
  - Strengthening annual giving
  - Expanding sponsorships
  - Increasing alumni engagement
  - Developing planned giving opportunities
  - Supporting long-term financial sustainability as CKYO approaches its 80th anniversary.

## Alumni Committee Report

### Pat Price, Chair

- Committee's continued focus on maintaining and strengthening connections between CKYO and the thousands of students who have participated in the organization throughout its 78-year history.
- CKYO alumni continue to make meaningful contributions across many fields, including:
  - Music
  - Education
  - Healthcare
  - Business
  - Public service
- While alumni pursue many different paths, they share a common experience:
  - Learning, growing, and making music as part of CKYO
- This year, CKYO celebrated a notable alumni achievement:
  - CKYO alumnus Zach Brock was named Artistic Director of the Chamber Music Festival of Lexington
  - The appointment reflects the continued impact of CKYO alumni on the artistic and cultural life of the community
- The year also included moments of reflection and remembrance for members of the CKYO family whose contributions left a lasting impact on the organization.
- CKYO remembered Jeremiah "Jerry" Day:
  - Jerry and his wife, Anna Day, were part of CKYO's earliest years
  - They helped establish the foundation of the organization that generations of students have benefited from
  - CKYO expressed gratitude for Jerry's lifelong connection to the organization and for his family's generous donation of his violin, which will continue supporting future young musicians
- CKYO also remembered Karri Sandino:
  - Through the generosity of her colleagues at GRW Engineers, a sponsorship for cello scholarships has been established in her memory
  - The scholarship support will provide future opportunities for CKYO students
- This spring, CKYO welcomed 34 graduating seniors into the alumni network.
  - Many of these students have spent years participating in CKYO
  - Their experiences included:
    - Rehearsals and performances
    - Building friendships
    - Developing leadership skills
    - Working toward shared artistic goals with peers
- Looking ahead toward CKYO's 80th anniversary, alumni engagement will become an increasingly important organizational priority.
  - Current committee goals include:
    - Strengthening the alumni database
    - Reconnecting with former members
    - Expanding alumni involvement opportunities through:
      - Events
      - Mentoring
      - Volunteer leadership
      - Organizational support
- Alumni were encouraged to complete the CKYO alumni survey to help maintain updated contact information and strengthen the alumni network for the future.

## Community/School Relations Committee Report

### Devin Onkst, Chair

- The Community and School Relations Committee continued its work to strengthen communication and engagement between CKYO, area schools, music educators, students, and the broader community during the 2025–2026 season.
- Committee responsibilities included:
  - Maintaining relationships with public and private school music programs
  - Promoting CKYO activities and audition opportunities
  - Supporting efforts to increase participation among underrepresented groups
- Committee membership for the year included:
  - Chair: Devin Onkst
  - Cody Birdwell
  - Lester Diaz
  - Christa Dunn
  - Joyce Nicholson
- A primary focus of the committee this season was increasing enrollment and awareness across CKYO's orchestras and ensembles.
- Outreach efforts supported CKYO's mission of:
  - Providing equitable access to high-quality musical opportunities
  - Fostering a lifelong love of music among young musicians throughout Central Kentucky
- Committee members and staff coordinated outreach efforts at:
  - School concerts
  - District honors concerts
  - Other music education events throughout the spring season
- Information tables were used to:
  - Share information about CKYO programs
  - Answer questions about the audition process
  - Connect directly with prospective students and families
- The committee also explored additional communication and visibility initiatives, including:
  - Development of a classroom poster for music programs
  - Inclusion of music educational content
  - Addition of a QR code linking directly to the CKYO website and audition information
- Challenges faced during the year included:
  - Coordinating committee member schedules with numerous school and concert events
  - Strengthening outreach and communication with orchestra directors in surrounding counties served by CKYO
- Priorities for the 2026–2027 season include:
  - Continuing outreach efforts with area schools
  - Expanding visibility at concerts and educational events
  - Increasing awareness of CKYO programs and audition opportunities
  - Reaching a broader range of students and families throughout the region
  - Identifying additional community engagement opportunities

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF

### BOARD of DIRECTORS

Kirsten Clingerman, *president*  
Stephanie Farrar, *vice president*  
Devin Onkst, *secretary*  
Louise Shouse, *treasurer*

Abigail Allan  
Janette Barrington  
Cody Birdwell  
Virgil Covington III  
Lester Diaz  
Christa Dunn  
Enrique Farfan  
Beth Florence

Cathy Mejia  
Joyce Nicholson  
Tyler Powell  
Patricia Price  
Amy Smith  
Bob Stadelman  
Tomoko Stoss  
Kerstin Wendroth



### ADMINISTRATIVE & OPERATIONS STAFF

Marcello Cormio, *Music Director*  
Amelia Groetsch, *Executive Director*  
Kaleb Cruz Collado, *Operations & Library*

### ARTISTIC STAFF

Nancy Campbell, *Repertory & Bravo String Orchestras*  
Marcello Cormio, *Symphony & Concert Orchestras*  
Raleigh Dailey, *Jazz Ensembles*  
Mary Elizabeth Henton, *Bravo String Orchestra*  
Samantha Vivian, *Percussion*  
Lois Wiggins, *Repertory Orchestra*

### MUSICWORKS STAFF

Chase Miller, *Program Director*  
Anna Watrous  
Ethan Young  
Chris Leverenz  
Edgar Querales

### FRIENDS IN MUSIC STAFF

Anna Watrous, *Co-Director*  
Chris Leverenz, *Co-Director*  
Richard Smith II  
Joey Elliott