Minot September 28, 2026

Dear Orchestra Teacher,

I'm excited to share that the Department of Fine and Performing Arts at Minot State University, in collaboration with the Minot Symphony Orchestra, will host its third Side-by-Side Festival in February 2027.

Following the success of our first two Side-by-Side Festivals, we are excited to continue and expand this program, giving string students from across the region the opportunity to rehearse and perform side-by-side with members of the Minot Symphony Orchestra.

This year's Festival will be part of two special Family Concerts featuring Carnegie Hall's *Link Up: The Orchestra Sings*. The participating students will perform alongside MSO musicians in repertoire that introduces audiences to the many voices and possibilities of the orchestra, including music by Thomas Cabaniss, Ludwig van Beethoven, Antonín Dvořák, Reena Esmail, Jim Papoulis, and Igor Stravinsky.

The festival will also feature a special Side-by-Side performance on February 7, in which the participating students will perform Nikos Skalkottas' Five *Greek Dances.*

The Family Concerts will also feature the winner of the Minot Symphony Orchestra Young Concerto Competition as a soloist.

We are particularly pleased to welcome **Dr. Yestyn Griffith**, our new Lecturer of Violin and Viola at Minot State University, to this year's Festival. Dr. Griffith joins our faculty with extensive experience as a violinist and educator and will be working closely with the participating students throughout the festival. He will join me and Dr. Erik Anderson (cello/bass) in rehearsals, sectionals, coaching sessions, and other special activities.

The festival will take place on the Minot State University campus and will include four rehearsals and a dress rehearsal leading up to the concerts. Through these activities, students will develop their musical skills while experiencing the collaboration, preparation, and excitement of performing as part of a professional orchestra.

Teachers may nominate students for participation. Final participation will be limited to **12 violins, 4 violas, 4 cellos, and 2 basses**. Participation in the Festival is free, although schools will be responsible for arranging transportation and lodging for their students.

To nominate students, please complete the Side-by-Side Festival Audition Form:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdmp7SlW2GNy-B9YEYZ1yYkHO7s4eXcrI45Ie094kidNh0mgw/viewform?usp=sharing&ouid=104539952984203797450

Video-recorded auditions of nominated students must be submitted through the audition form by **December 4th, 2026**. Selected students will be announced by **December 14th, 2026**. Music and additional Festival information will be provided to participating students and teachers following the selection process.

We are looking forward to another exciting Side-by-Side Festival and to continuing to build opportunities for young musicians throughout our region. We are grateful for your participation and collaboration in making this program a meaningful experience for your students.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the repertoire, Festival schedule, auditions, or student preparation. We look forward to working with you and your students in February!

Sincerely,

Efraín Amaya
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