



Summer String Experience 2025 Report

The **Summer String Experience (SSE)** ran from **July 13–18, 2025**. Formerly a program of the Saskatoon Suzuki String Program with funding from SOA, this year SSE was administered directly by **SaskOrchestras**. This change allowed us to broaden participation to all young violin, viola, or cello players aged **3–16**, regardless of background or familiarity with the Suzuki repertoire.

Our goal was to retain the best elements of past SSEs while welcoming fiddle students and expanding accessibility. Students registered in one of four program streams: **Beginner**, **Developing**, **Orchestra**, and **Chamber Music**. Enrollment rose from **83 in 2024 to 121 in 2025**, a strong indicator of community interest and support—even before the camp began.

Sunday Afternoon

Camp kicked off with parents and students picking up schedules and t-shirts, followed by an introduction to faculty and a building tour. Students were then grouped into their respective programs for an initial session:

- **Beginners** were introduced to instrument care and basic posture.
- **Developing Program** students participated in group playing to rebuild ensemble skills after summer break.
- **Orchestra and Chamber** students met with their orchestras, received music, and began rehearsals.

As an introduction to this year's new fiddle elements, the day concluded with a **30-minute folk dance session**, led by **Kim deLaforest**, who provided live music and instruction. This served as a fun icebreaker and a teaser for Tuesday's barn dance.

Monday–Thursday: Morning Schedule

Beginner Program



Grouped roughly by age, Beginner students participated in:

- **Small group classes** (~6 students)
- **Large group classes** (~12 students)
- **Movement class** with **Sheryl Salen**, Arts Specialist, Saskatoon Public Schools

The movement class gave students a break from the concentration required for learning an instrument and included choreography for the camp finale. Each morning concluded with **crafts or sports**, and their day ended at **12:30 p.m.**

Developing & Orchestra Programs

Students were divided by playing level and participated in:

- **Small group technique classes**
- **Large group fiddle repertoire classes** (including the Fiddle Finale)
- **Movement or percussion class**
- **Crafts or sports**



Developing students were dismissed at 12:30 p.m., while **Orchestra students** stayed for afternoon rehearsals.

Chamber Music Program

Chamber students, organized into **quartets or quintets**, spent the morning in:

- **Two coaching sessions** (classical and pops repertoire)
- **Supervised rehearsal sessions** with senior assistants (many of whom were SSE alumni)
- **Percussion/rhythmic training**



Monday–Thursday: Afternoon Schedule

Orchestra Program



Orchestra students were divided into:

- **Atlantic Orchestra** (for those new to orchestral playing)
 - **Pacific Orchestra** (for more experienced players)
- Afternoons included:
- **Sectionals** (instrument-specific rehearsals)
 - **Full orchestra rehearsals**

The repertoire covered a mix of **classical, fiddle, and pop** styles.

Arctic Orchestra



Composed of Chamber Music participants, the Arctic Orchestra focused on:

- **Advanced parts** of the **Pops Finale** and **Fiddle Finale** (no sectionals)
 - High-level ensemble experience in a large orchestra
-

Special Events

Tuesday Evening: Barn Dance



To celebrate Saskatoon's rich string traditions, the **Saskatoon Fiddle Orchestra**, along with **Booker Blakley** (caller), hosted an evening of square dancing. It was a joyful community event, bringing together families and students of all ages.

Thursday Evening: Chamber Music Concert



All six chamber groups performed **two contrasting pieces**, showcasing both classical and contemporary styles. This performance was a highlight for many of the older, more advanced students.

Friday: Dress Rehearsal & Finale

The day began with a **full dress rehearsal**, including:

- Individual group pieces
- Combined fiddle group performances
- All three orchestras
- The Pops and Fiddle Finales

Beginner and Developing students left at **12:30 p.m.**, while **Orchestra and Chamber** students remained for a final, relaxed rehearsal.



Later in the day, **Dr. Veronique Mathieu** (University of Saskatchewan), shared a workshop on **graphic notation** and **contemporary composition techniques**. Students explored interpreting and creating graphic scores in a hands-on session.

Friday Evening: Final Concert

All students participated in the closing concert, which included:

- Beginner demonstrations
- Small group pieces
- Combined fiddle group pieces
- Orchestra repertoire
- Two finale pieces:
 - **Fiddle Finale** (arr. Kim deLaforest)
 - **Pops Finale** (arr. James Legge)

The Pops Finale featured choreography by **Sheryl Salen**, integrating movement and music in a joyful celebration of the week's work as all 121 students performed together



Conclusion

We are proud of what we achieved with SSE 2025. The program brought together a broader, more diverse group of students and teachers under a shared vision of expanding string education in Saskatoon.

This year, we were able to:

- Hire more teachers, thanks to increased enrollment
- Involve a wide range of participants, including:
 - **3 First Nations students**
 - **2 Métis students**
 - **7 Inuit students from Pangnirtung, Nunavut, via the Fiddles North project**

We also welcomed professionals, amateurs and educators from across the string-playing community, including the **Saskatoon Fiddle Orchestra**, **Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra** members, and **Dr. Mathieu**.

Transitioning away from the Suzuki program meant reinventing much of the administrative structure. Special thanks go to **Elaine Kaloustian** for developing our new website and registration system among her many other tasks.

Financially, we applied for and were supported by a grant from the **Community Initiatives Fund**, allowing us to offer some financial assistance. Several participants also received funding from **Creative Kids**.

Looking Ahead

One major uncertainty is the **future availability of space** at the University of Saskatchewan. A change in leadership delayed confirmation of our venue until months after registration had opened. Although we paid only modest fees this year, future rental costs could run into **several thousand dollars**, making long-term planning difficult.

We already have ideas for improvements and refinements for next year, and we feel confident that this year's camp was a major step forward.



Thank you to the board of SaskOrchestras for making SSE 2025 possible.
James Legge

2025 SOA International Saito Conducting Workshop

Report by Wayne Toews August 8, 2025



The 2025 Saskatchewan Orchestral Association's International Saito Conducting workshop was held from July 19 to 26 at Grosvenor Park United Church, Saskatoon. Thirteen conductors registered; eleven participated. A well respected and liked colleague, who participated in 2024 and planned to participate again in 2025, died on June 29th. Another applicant withdrew just before the refund deadline in order to attend a family event. That left us in a deficit position because the people on the wait list had committed to other events. We kept the \$200 deposit.

The instructional team consisting of George Charpentier, Adrian Casas, Shaun Bzdel, Britni Shingoose and me along with pianists Michelle Aalders and Chris Kelly overcame many challenges to offer this world-class workshop. The death of our colleague impacted us emotionally. The roads on Cumberland Ave. and around the church were under construction. That meant extra special planning to move my piano in and out of the church. It was difficult to get to the church and to park. On several days construction noise was disruptive. The costs were higher - some by as much as 20%. Because the mother of one of the participants was admitted to the hospital just before the workshop began he participated when he could in order to spend time with her. We did all we could to accommodate his irregular participation. The Western Canadian music festival was happening in Saskatoon during the workshop. Michelle did a great job of juggling her commitments so that she could accompany two festival participants. The tall green hedge outside the church that we used previously as a backdrop for the group photo was cut down so low as to be unusable. Because the room we had used for the Welcome supper for the past few years was not available we brought food in to eat in the church basement. We had to declare the workshop "nut free" because one of the participants was severely allergic to them. Several others had food allergies that meant extensive planning for the food that was made available. The recital audience of 38 was smaller than we hoped likely because road construction outside the church made access and parking difficult.

One of the workshop goals was to support local musicians by providing the opportunity to work and earn money during the summer when such opportunities are scarce. Warren Rutherford, the local Musicians' Union Secretary/Treasurer, helped to secure a Music Performance Trust Fund grant. That allowed me to pay each a bit more for their outstanding work.

The biographies of the participants and the instructional team are posted here:

<https://conductorschool.com/2025class/2025class.html>

Four of the participating conductors are Saskatchewan residents. A significant number of the conductors leading choirs, bands and orchestras in Saskatchewan communities and schools have participated in the workshop.

The study repertoire consisted of 33 pieces, two of which were composed by participating conductors and were given their premiere performances at the recital. I created string orchestra arrangements of 13 of the repertoire pieces. The workshop schedule generally ran from 8:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. with 90 minutes for lunch and 15 minute breaks in the morning and afternoon. On Tuesday evening we offered a special program to study videos of other conductors. On Thursday evening Crispi Lord led the conductors in drama exercises to assist them in developing podium presence.

We are fortunate to have the services of George Charpentier and Shaun Bzdel with their professional quality equipment to record the sessions onto SDHC cards. They, along with Adrian, moved the many pieces of equipment that included: mirrors, weights, 30 music stands, fans, cushions, extra music, projection screen, video projector and speakers.

A Welcome supper was held on the Saturday evening. Shaun Bzdel hosted a dinner for the participants on Wednesday evening at his acreage. The workshop concluded with a superb BBQ hosted by Elaine Kaloustian for the conductors and performers. A strong community of support is developed through these activities. One conductor has participated each year since 2016. Six others have participated multiple times too. We interpret that as the workshop having value and providing a welcoming place to learn. Several of the orchestra members said that the workshop is their favorite activity of the year. A Facebook forum shares information about events involving participants from the past few years.

Ryan Wheler conducted his arrangement of *Moose Mountain*, the SOA's anniversary song, so that a quality audio recording of the piece is available for promotion by the SOA.

One of the participants wrote: "We have been home a week now and I am still basking in the glow of the workshop. It was intense and exciting to learn new techniques to better communicate with my group." Another wrote: "I feel so much more confident in my musicianship on the podium, off the podium, and behind my cello. I'm more mindful of how I carry myself, which really has reinforced my self-esteem and confidence."

Thanks to the board of Saskatchewan Orchestral Association for the continued support of this important program. Previous workshops accrued surpluses. The 2025 workshop had a small loss because of the withdrawal of a participant just before the refund deadline. As of August 8, 2025 I'm awaiting several invoices and the MPTF grant payment. The interim financial statement and recital programme are attached.



2025 Saskatchewan Orchestral Association's International Saito Conducting Workshop Recital

Wayne Toews, Director and principal instructor
George Charpentier, Adrian Casas, Shaun Bzdel & Britni Shingoose - Instructors

PROGRAMME

2:30 p.m. Saturday, July 26, 2025 Grosvenor Park United Church, Saskatoon, SK, Canada

Dedicated to the memory of our colleague Kenneth Freed who passed away June 29, 2025

Wayne Toews, M.C. George Charpentier & Shaun Bzdel, video recording

Greetings from **Adrian Casas**, Saskatchewan Orchestral Association past chair

Deborah Rebeck Ash	Koontz Ayre for Strings	Puccini Cristantemi
Ryan Wheler	Minkus Moderato #1 (La Bayadère)	Stuart Ayre for Eventide
Matt Clarke	Wolf-Ferrari Andante from Serenade	Strauss Blue Danube Waltz 1
Wendy Mazon	Puccini Crisantemi	Coleridge-Taylor Moderato
Glen Ullman	Haydn Allegro	Respighi Italiana
Daniel Regnier	Minkus Moderato Assai #6 (La Bayadère)	Regnier Clamores et Susurri
Thomas Vaquer	von Weber La Dorina Bella Theme	Minkus Moderato #1 (La Bayadère)
Dorianna Holowachuk	Kuhlau Larghetto	Durufié Ubi Caritas Zuckerman Theme Song
Gail Green	von Weber La Dorina Bella Theme	Stuart Ayre for Eventide
Nadia Petriw	Haydn Allegro	Maykapar Starry Night Zuckerman Theme Song
Justine Koontz	Respighi Italiana	Koontz Ayre for Strings
Britni Shingoose	Puccini Cristantemi	

The performers:

Piano Michelle Aalders & Chris Kelly

Violin

Anna Bekolay
Oxana Ossiptchouk
Michael Swan
Sarah ter Velde

Viola

Jeremy Janzen
James Legge

Cello

Scott McKnight
John Payzant

Bass

Nevin Buehler

For conducting workshop information visit <http://conductorschool.com>

Thanks to: Grosvenor Park United Church, our gracious host, the Saskatoon Concert Band for use of music stands and keyboard, to Shaun Bzdel, Elaine Kaloustian and Britni Shingoose for providing hospitality. Special thanks to Shaun Bzdel, Adrian Casas, George Charpentier and Britni Shingoose for doing so many things to help.

For information about the Saskatchewan Orchestral Association and its programs visit <http://saskorchestras.com>



The SOA receives funding from SaskCulture thanks to the Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture and Recreation.



This performance is presented with the support of the Music Performance Trust Fund grant obtained from the Canadian Federation of Musicians with the assistance of Local 553, Warren Rutherford, Secretary/Treasurer.



Membership Activities Report

Battleford Community Youth Strings

The Battleford Community Youth Strings (BCYS) provided small group violin lessons to students over the past year. Sessions were held at two schools in the Battlefords during lunchtime, and a community group met every Wednesday evening, open to all ages. The primary goal was to enable members to express themselves through music—a goal that was achieved within the limited exposure available this year.

Community Arts Mentorship Program

This year's installment for fiddle fleet upkeep enabled the program to run all scheduled activities, particularly in schools that borrow instruments from the fleet due to lack of resources. Without this support, 50 students would have been turned away. The funding for repairs was crucial; without it, many instruments would have been unusable. Now, every instrument is fully functional and ready for years to come. The goals and objectives of the project were fully met.



Cecilian Chamber Series

The Cecilian Chamber Series featured the Sinta Saxophone Quartet and Dali String Quartet, who worked with Regina and area students in masterclass formats, both for ensembles and soloists. These sessions were meaningful and relevant for all participants.



Dalí Quartet Violin, Viola and Cello Master Classes



DATE: MONDAY MARCH 24, 2025

LOCATION: Conservatory of Performing Arts

TIMES: 7:00PM-9:00PM

REGISTRATION DEADLINE - March 17, 2025

AUDIENCE MEMBERS ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND THE CLASS!!

*\$50 Masterclass fee includes a ticket to the DALI QUARTET concert
Sunday March 23, 3:00 PM at Darke Hall*

[Scan to Enroll here!](#)



Conservatory of Performing Arts

ABOUT THE CONSERVATORY

Located on the edge of downtown Regina, the Conservatory of Performing Arts has offered high-quality, accessible arts education to learners of all ages and abilities since 1912. We believe performing arts education has a positive impact on a person's growth and success; our passion is providing opportunities for everyone to be actively engaged in the arts.



WHAT WE OFFER

Private Music Lessons are the heart of the Conservatory. We also offer a range of group classes in music, theatre, visual art and dance for youth to seniors. Classes range from one day workshops to year long programs and lessons. We accept students at anytime of the year for Private Lessons with fall registration for new students starting July/August annually. Group Programs have three primary periods when registration opens: Fall Term (opens May 15), Winter/Spring Term (opens Nov 15) and Summer Term (opens March 15). Watch our website or follow us on Facebook and Instagram to keep up-to-date with our extensive program offerings.

Adult Group Music Classes	Scottish Piping & Drumming
Dance for Adults	Performances & Recitals
Early Learning Classes	Youth Music Ensembles & Choirs
Private Music Lessons	Youth Musical Theatre & Drama

In 2024-25, the Conservatory of Performing Arts offered several key orchestral string programs, including Introduction to Strings Workshops, Youth Strings Program Cello, Youth String Orchestra, and the Regina Community Orchestra. Private lessons were available for violin, viola, cello, and double bass. Six term-end showcases were presented at Darke Hall, and seven string recitals were held in the Heritage Lecture Theatre. Masterclasses included sessions with Heng-Han Hou (violin), David Liam Roberts (cello), and members of the Dali Quartet. The Conservatory maintains an ongoing partnership with the Cecilian Chamber Series for these masterclasses.

OUR SPONSORS & FUNDERS



Families with financial need can apply to Creative Kids Saskatchewan funding for their children ages 4-19 to take any of our camps, courses or music lessons. Find more information about the application process at www.creativekidsask.ca.

Elixir Chamber Music Concerts – 2024/2025 Season Overview



Elixir Ensemble presents
Two more exciting trios by
Beethoven and Brahms!

Beethoven's trio Op. 1 no. 2 in G major
Brahms' Trio in C major Op. 87

Sunday, March 30
2:30pm
Mayfair United Church
902 33rd St W, Saskatoon

for more info
visit elixirensemble.com



Over the past year, Elixir presented two chamber music concerts at Mayfair United Church in Saskatoon. The theme for these performances was "Beethoven and Brahms." The first concert, held on October 27, 2024, featured Beethoven's Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano Op. 70 No. 1 ("The Ghost") and Brahms' Trio in C minor, Op. 101. The second concert, on March 30, 2025, included Beethoven's Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano Op. 1 No. 2 in G major and Brahms' Trio in C major, Op. 87.

All of these works are recognized masterpieces of the chamber music repertoire and were enthusiastically received by the audience. The performers—Oxana Ossiptchouk (violin), Peter Hedlin (cello), and Kathleen Solose (piano)—are accomplished professional artists dedicated to bringing high-quality chamber music to audiences across the province. For more information about the performers and previous seasons, please visit <http://www.elixirensemble.com>.

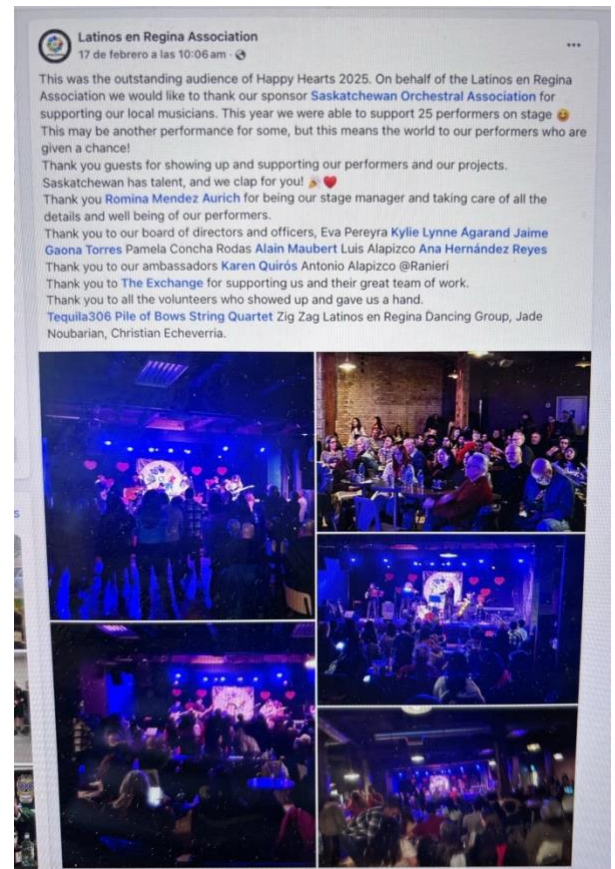
Latinos en Regina – Happy Hearts Celebration

Happy Hearts Celebration – Event Summary

The Happy Hearts Celebration is an annual event dedicated to supporting emerging local musical talent. This inclusive gathering features artistic activities accessible to people of all ages.

Highlights from this year's event included:

- **Performances:**
 - *Ritmos de mi Tierra* cultural dancers, representing a blend of cultures from Colombia, El Salvador, Brazil, and Mexico.
 - *Pile of Bows Quartet*, a Canadian string quartet of professional musicians.
 - *Zig Zag Band*, an emerging group of teenage musicians, all under 18, including a 12-year-old guitarist and a singer from Brazil.
 - *Tequila Band*, a Latino ensemble with members from El Salvador, Mexico, and Canada, showcasing new musical talent.
- **Interactive Activities:**
 - A painting contest for guests, themed "How music makes me happy," which encouraged creativity and cultural learning.
 - Opportunities for attendees to learn and teach musical techniques.
- **Cultural Experience:**
 - Traditional Latino food and desserts were available for purchase, enhancing the festive atmosphere.
- **Community Impact:**
 - The event was lively and well-received, with attendees dancing to the music and musicians noting the crowd's enthusiasm.
 - The celebration fostered an environment of love, tolerance, respect, unity, and fun, ensuring everyone found something to enjoy.
- **Social Media Reach:**
 - The event generated over 10,000 views and interactions on the Latinos en Regina Association Facebook page during the weekend.



Prairie Cello Institute

Prairie Cello Institute – Project Narrative Summary

After thirteen successful years of the Prairie Cello Institute Summer Intensive, the organization recognized the need for a new direction to better serve all participants. For the 2024/25 season, the Institute transitioned to a series of masterclasses led by visiting artists. These masterclasses were designed for a select group of performers, while also welcoming a broad audience of observers.

In the fall, two masterclasses were held with support from individual SOA Project Grants: one led by the VC2 Cello Duo and another by RSO Opening Night soloist Stéphane Tetreault. The main focus of this report is on three masterclasses conducted in 2025, featuring Professor Leanne Zacharias (Brandon University), David Liam Roberts (performer for the Regina Musical Club under Prairie Debut), and Katie Schlaikjer of the Penderecki String Quartet.

Each masterclass took place in a unique venue—the University of Regina, Regina Conservatory of the Arts, and Darke Hall—offering participants and observers a range of acoustic experiences. Each session included five performers and numerous observers, covering a wide variety of repertoire. The clinicians brought diverse perspectives and energized everyone with their expertise and personalities. Their feedback addressed both detailed and broad aspects of musical performance, providing each participant with a valuable public lesson and giving observers insight into the mindset of professional musicians.



Project Goals and Outcomes

The primary goals were to offer cellists at various stages of their musical journey meaningful perspective and advice, and to create opportunities for learning from feedback given to others. These objectives were fully and successfully achieved.

Prince Albert Strings Orchestra

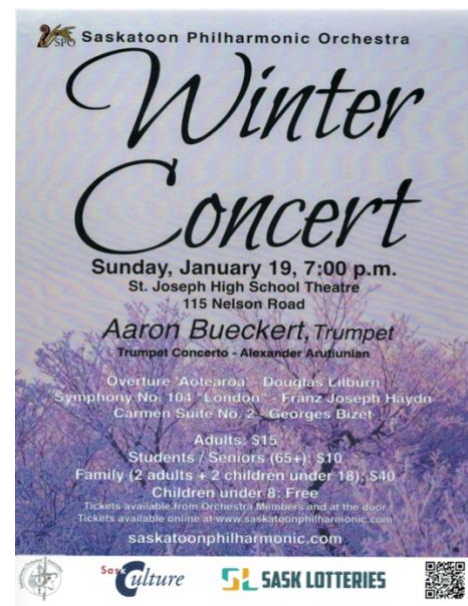
Prince Albert Strings Orchestra – 2024/2025 Season Summary

The PA Strings Orchestra participated in the Shellbrook Carol Festival, a community Christmas concert that brought together several local groups and individuals. The event was well attended, with approximately 300 people in the audience. In addition to this performance, the orchestra organized a specialized mini-workshop for the bass section, led by Dean Bernier. The group also held its annual Spring Concert, which attracted an audience of around 200 people and featured a diverse program of classical and modern music.



Saskatoon Philharmonic Orchestra

The orchestra held two concerts this year. The Winter Concert featured Aaron Buechert performing the Alexander Arutunian Trumpet Concerto. The joint spring concert with the St. Joseph High School choir was a major success, with a full house in attendance.



Poltava Ensemble

In September 2024, the Poltava Ensemble began preparations for a highly active cultural season. Seven members of the Poltava Orchestra attended the AUUC National Orchestral Workshop in Vancouver, BC, in November, where they performed a significant repertoire including works by Dvorak, a newly discovered score by Velinsky, a Ukrainian Suite by Shatulsky, and a new orchestration of "Arkan" created and debuted by conductor/arranger V. Prysiazhniuk, a recent Ukrainian newcomer to Canada.

Following the workshop, the orchestra started recording dance music for rehearsal purposes for both the Poltava Ensemble and School. Preparations were also underway for several major events:

- **Malanka 2025:** Development of posters, tickets, and repertoire for the Ukrainian New Year's celebration.
- **OSAC Poltava Ensemble Concert:** Planning for a performance at Danceland, Manitou Beach, Watrous, SK, at the end of January 2025.
- **Poltava Annual Concert:** Scheduled for February 2025.

Additionally, the ensemble received an invitation from the Council of International Organization of Folklore and Folk Art Festivals (CIOFF) to perform in Mexico in October 2025. In December 2024, the University of Regina Music Department requested the Poltava Orchestra to join the University of Regina Symphony Orchestra for their year-end concert in April 2025.

Key Events and Performances:

- **Malanka 2025:** Held on January 18, 2025, at the Regina Performing Arts Centre, this Ukrainian New Year's celebration featured a buffet supper, live music by the Poltava Orchestra, and a dance party for all attendees. Despite extreme cold, the event drew approximately 300 guests.



- **Danceland Concert:** On January 26, 2025, the ensemble performed a ninety-minute show at Danceland, Manitou Beach, attracting around 200 patrons.
- **AUUC Poltava Annual Concert:** Held on February 8, 2025, at RPAC, this concert featured the orchestra accompanying dancers and performing its own repertoire, with an audience of 425.
- **Collaboration with UofR Symphony Orchestra:** On April 6, 2025, at the Ridell Centre, University of Saskatchewan, the Poltava Orchestra joined the UofR Symphony Orchestra to perform Lysenko's "Taras Bulba" and other works.

International and Community Engagement:

- The ensemble is preparing for the CIOFF Mexico performance in October 2025, with 32 musicians, dancers, and directors set to travel.
- At Mosaic 2025 (June 5–7), the Poltava Pavilion hosted 20 half-hour shows over three days, drawing 6,600 patrons, 130 performers, and 150 volunteers. The event received high praise for its food, performances, and live orchestra.

Ongoing Activities:

- Intensive rehearsals, costume alterations, and fundraising efforts are underway for the Mexico tour, including ticket raffles, food sales, and donation campaigns.
- Additional fundraising initiatives include sticker sales, QR code donations, bottle drives, fitness days, and meat sales in partnership with the Ukrainian Co-op.

The Poltava Ensemble continues to demonstrate strong community involvement and cultural leadership through its performances, collaborations, and international outreach.

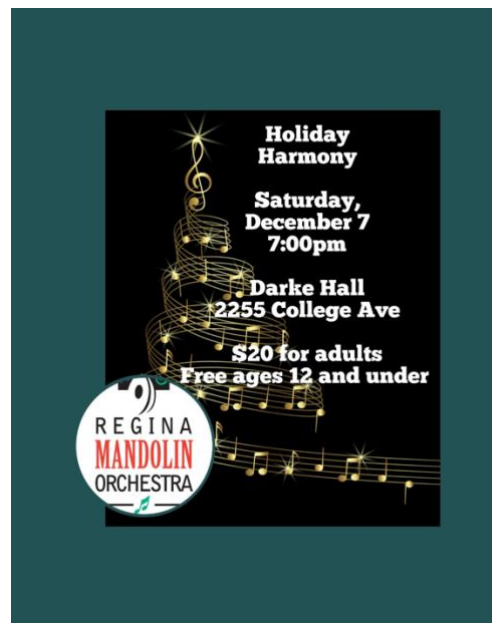
Regina Community Orchestra

The Regina Community Orchestra is comprised of 21 members, ranging from grade school students to seniors. Throughout the year, the orchestra enjoyed performing at the Conservatory, as well as at external venues including Wascana Rehab, Winterfest, and Qu'Appelle House. The group also participated in the Tunes & Turkey Christmas program alongside other amateur musicians. The season concluded with a year-end concert at Darke Hall, where the orchestra performed with other groups that rehearse at the Conservatory.

Regina Mandolin Orchestra

The Regina Mandolin Orchestra began its season in September, resuming weekly Saturday rehearsals at Broadway United Church and continuing its student lesson program. In September 2024, three members attended the annual Classical Mandolin Society of America (CMSA) convention in Rochester, New York, participating in a massed orchestra of 120 plucked string musicians. This experience continues to be a valuable resource for the orchestra, supporting repertoire development, technical skill advancement, ensemble playing, and conducting.

Most performances by the Regina Mandolin Orchestra are scheduled from October through June at seniors' homes. This season, the orchestra secured ten engagements and saw increased requests for small ensemble appearances, including duets, quartets, and groups of up to 14 members (known as Mandomonium). The flexibility of smaller ensembles allows the orchestra to accept daytime performances and play at venues too small for the full group, which now numbers close to 40 members. This format also encourages exploration of new techniques and repertoire, provides more frequent performance opportunities for members, and benefits the larger orchestra by raising overall performance standards. Additionally, small ensemble performances have generated extra income, resulting in a positive financial position at year-end.



The ensemble's performances in 2023–24 led to new opportunities in 2024–25. Notable events included the Scarecrow Festival in Lumsden, a fundraiser for St. George Orthodox Cathedral, and cocktail hour entertainment at "An Evening in Greece," a fundraiser for the Hospitals of Regina Foundation. The group also performed at the Gopher Drop in Cupar, expanding its reach to new rural audiences.

In July 2025, Mandomonium performed at The Bandstand at Regina's Wascana Lake, aiming to attract new audiences, especially families. Despite challenging weather, the event reached attendees who were previously unfamiliar with the orchestra. In August, the ensemble played at a neighborhood picnic, impressing residents and securing future invitations. Past performances at Broadway Terrace led to a trio being invited to a resident's 70th wedding anniversary.

The orchestra also performed at Regina's Winter Festival in the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, attracting new audience members who later attended the May concert. The Quartet+ ensemble continued to provide background music at public shows for the Regina Art Collective and Nature

Saskatchewan at The Lobby Art Gallery. Regular monthly performances at seniors' homes Green Falls Landing and Trinity Manor have led to additional opportunities at trade shows and other residences, such as The Bentley.

For the seasonal concert in 2024, the orchestra returned to Darke Hall and welcomed "Living Skies Chorus" as special guests. This partnership introduced both groups to new audiences. In March 2024, the orchestra performed at a special event at Government House, hosted by the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan and spouse, presenting the "A Step Back in Time" program in period costumes. The success of this event led to an invitation to perform at the New Year's Day Levee in January 2025, a public celebration that allowed community members to experience mandolin music. The orchestra has already secured another engagement with Government House for 2025–26.

In May 2025, the orchestra opened the Cathedral Village Arts Festival at Westminster United Church for the 32nd consecutive time, presenting a program titled "Charting a Course Through the Decades." This event saw the largest audience attendance to date. Participation in the CVAF Street Fair has become the orchestra's most effective recruitment initiative, generating interest and new sign-ups for mandolin lessons.

To celebrate a successful season, the orchestra hosted a music gathering in June 2025 at a local park, inviting neighborhood residents to join and enjoy food from a food truck. The event fostered community engagement and resulted in a generous donation from a neighbor.

The Regina Mandolin Orchestra concludes its 36th season in a strong position, supported by an active board of directors who have overseen website and music archive updates, policy development, and by-law revisions. Investments in technology have improved rehearsal and performance quality, and the orchestra continues to promote itself through Facebook and Instagram. Above all, the group remains committed to musical growth and enjoyment.

South Saskatchewan Youth Orchestra

South Saskatchewan Youth Orchestra – 2024/2025 Season Summary

During the 2024–2025 season, the South Saskatchewan Youth Orchestra delivered a robust program of activities and performances:

- **Public Performances:**

The orchestra presented ten public concerts, including an informal rehearsal for parents at the annual retreat (October 12), a collaborative concert with the Regina Symphony Orchestra (November 23), a Christmas concert at Knox Metropolitan United Church (December 15), and a tour to Swift Current and Medicine Hat (February 14–15), which featured performances at two elementary schools and Medicine Hat College. Additional highlights included the Spring Fete (March 30), a performance at the Cathedral Village Arts Festival, a joint concert with the University of Regina orchestra in April, and a final concert in June.

- **Educational Opportunities:**

Students benefited from masterclasses with visiting artists from the Regina Musical Club series and the Cecilian Chamber Series. They also had the chance to participate in the SSYO Concerto Competition on May 17.

- **Enrichment Activities:**

The orchestra organized three special educational events:

1. The annual retreat, where students worked with an expert on their instrument and attended a clinic on improvisation and composition led by local composer Clinton Ackerman (October 12).
2. Sectional coaching throughout the year, with specialists for each instrument group, scheduled before rehearsals.
3. As part of the February tour, students worked with Alberta cellist Christine Bootland, who served as guest conductor and strings specialist.



- **Community and Social Engagement:**

The orchestra planned a variety of social activities to foster connections among students. These included a successful retreat in October featuring sectionals, an improvisation/composition class, and a pizza lunch; a crafting afternoon in November where members and their families created felted Christmas ornaments at the George Bothwell Library; and a group outing for dinner followed by a Regina Symphony Orchestra concert on May 10.

This comprehensive program provided students with valuable performance experience, educational enrichment, and opportunities to build community within the orchestra.

Saskatoon Suzuki Strings



1. Thomas Krieg	Twinkle
2. Elanor Bell	On Tell Aunt Rhody
3. Gemma Friggstad	Etsude
4. Asher Worden	Song of the Wind
5. Genevieve Weidmark	May Song
6. Levi Gosling	Minuet 2 J.S. Bach
7. Emma Schmidt	Long, Long Ago
8. Isla Millar	O Come Little Children
9. Katherine Griffin	Minuet 3 J.S. Bach
10. Isla Schmidt	Happy Farmer B. Schumann
11. Maebry Schmidt	Moon Over Ruined Castle
12. Isaac Leung	Allegro
13. Jason Friesberg	Song of the Wind
14. Annabelle Sanders	Andantino
15. Luisa Yubelle Constantino	Song of the Wind
16. Maria Sophia Constantino	Gavotte J.B. Lully
17. Maevie Friggstad	Perpetual Motion
18. Ann Ha	Minuet 3 J.S. Bach
19. Reagan Manchur	Good News arr. C. Donkin
20. Fergus Miller	Gavotte J.B. Lully
21. Lucas Zhe	Gavotte in D major J.S. Bach
22. Elizabeth Gee	Humoresque A. Dvorak
23. Oswald Lu	Gavotte J. Becker
24. Nicholas Zhe	Perpetual Motion C. Bohm



Saskatoon Suzuki Strings – 2024/2025 Season Highlights

This year, our students had the opportunity to perform at three different schools: Victoria School, Forest Grove, and St. Matthew. Each school provided an enthusiastic and engaged audience for our two orchestras, who presented selections from their repertoire. All students also participated in performing a variety of Suzuki pieces. It was rewarding to see our students confidently announce the pieces and interact with their peers from other schools.

We also participated in the Children's Festival, where students performed at our booth and encouraged children to try instruments at our "petting zoo." Although we were scheduled to play on the Main Stage, we were unable to gather enough students

in time, but we plan to improve our coordination for next year. Additionally, our students performed before the Disney Frozen concert, which was well received by audiences and provided an excellent opportunity to promote the Saskatoon Suzuki Strings Ensemble (SSE). As in previous years, we concluded our summer with a performance at the Fireworks Festival.

Project Outcomes

One of our most important goals was to foster strong bonds among our students and to encourage them to share their love of music with others. We are pleased to report that these objectives were fully achieved. Notably, we reached the highest number of students in schools since the onset of COVID-19. We look forward to building on this success and expanding our goals in the future.

Saskatoon Youth Orchestra

Saskatoon Youth Orchestra – 2024/2025 Season Report

Report to the Saskatchewan Orchestral Association on the 2024–2025 SYO Inc. Season

Submitted by Paul Sinkewicz

Season Overview The 2024–2025 season began with the third annual SYO and Friends Summer Orchestra concert on August 3. This event served as both a mini-reunion and a fundraiser, supporting the SYO Fee Assistance Program and the Heart of the City Piano Program. Regular rehearsals commenced on September 8. Both the SYO full orchestra and the Saskatoon Strings ensemble enjoyed strong registration numbers. By the end of the season, the Saskatoon Strings had 29 players and the SYO had 67, with some fluctuation due to withdrawals and late joiners.

Retreat Weekend

The senior ensemble held a retreat on September 21–22 at Quance Theatre and the Department of Music at USask. The first day featured sectional instruction and a pizza party, while the second day included social activities such as quizzes, prizes, snacks, a full orchestra rehearsal, and a mini-concert.

Concerts and Performances

- **Winter Concert:**
On December 15, 2024, the Saskatoon Strings performed at 4:00 pm, followed by two concerts by the SYO senior ensemble at 6:30 pm and 8:30 pm, all at Quance Theatre, Education Building, USask.
- **SYO Annual Orchestra Open House:**
Held on February 9, this event invited developing orchestral musicians to join the full orchestra for a rehearsal and repertoire session with sectional instructors, free of charge.
- **Violin/Viola Masterclass:**
On March 15, 2025, violist Carolyn Farnand led a masterclass for violin and viola players in Saskatoon, coinciding with her performance in the Amati Concert Series.
- **SYO & SSO Joint Concert:**
The annual joint concert with the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra took place on April 12, 2025, at TCU Place. The 67 SYO members performed alongside sectional coaches under guest conductor Armand Birk, presenting Mars and Jupiter from Holst's *The Planets*.
- **SSTR Lobby Performance:**
On March 29, 2025, the Saskatoon Strings performed in the lobby at TCU Place for guests of the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra.



- **Spring Concerts:**



On April 5 and 6, the SYO presented its Spring Concerts at Quance Theatre, featuring Jon Tait performing Mozart's Concerto for Bassoon and Orchestra. The program included *Mars and Jupiter* from *The Planets*, *Rhapsody in Blue*, *On Top of the World*, and the finale from Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5. The Saskatoon Strings held their Spring Concert on April 6.

Competitions and Tours

- **2025 Concerto Competition:**

Held on April 23, 2025, the competition was won by oboist Tyrell Hardlotte, who performed Williams' Oboe Concerto in A minor. Tyrell will perform the piece with the full orchestra in December 2025.

- **Saskatoon Strings School Tour:**

Continuing a longstanding tradition, the Saskatoon Strings visited three schools the day after the final concert of the season. On April 7, 2025, they performed at George Vanier School in Avalon, then traveled to schools in Allan and Colonsay, playing for the entire student bodies at each location. All performances were well received.

Community and Ensemble Development

The annual Fall Retreat provided orchestra members with opportunities to build relationships, learn new repertoire in sectionals and full rehearsals, and participate in social activities. The weekend concluded with a free concert at Quance Theatre, showcasing the players' progress.

Project Outcomes

The goals and objectives for the season were met. The ensemble benefited from meaningful bonding experiences, musical growth, and community engagement. The variety of performances, educational opportunities, and outreach activities contributed to a successful and rewarding year for all participants.

from *The Planets*, *Rhapsody in Blue*, *On Top of the World*, and the Finale from Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5. The Saskatoon Strings held their Spring Concert on April 6.

The annual SYO Concerto Competition took place on April 23, 2025. Tyrell Hardlotte, oboist, won the competition with a performance of Williams' Oboe Concerto in A minor and will perform the piece with the full orchestra in December 2025.

A longstanding tradition continued with the Saskatoon Strings School Tour, held the day after the final concert of the season. This year, the ensemble visited George Vanier School in Avalon on April 7, 2025, and then traveled to schools in Allan and Colonsay, performing for the entire student populations at each location.

The annual Fall Retreat provided orchestra members with opportunities to build relationships, learn new repertoire in sectionals and full rehearsals, and participate in social activities. The weekend concluded with a free concert at Quance Theatre, showcasing the progress made by the players in a short time.

Overall, the season offered valuable bonding experiences, educational enrichment, and performance opportunities for all participants.

Tisdale and District Strings

Tisdale and District Strings – 2024/2025 Season Summary



Tisdale and District Strings
January 26 Awards Concert Maurice Taylor Theatre, Tisdale 2:00
Special guest—Terri Bromm, MLA, Carrot River Valley

Awards will be presented to
Mackenzie Thesen, Erika and Eliah Moenga and ~~Sedoo~~ Larsen

Everyone is welcome



The Tisdale and District Strings had a vibrant and eventful year. The group performed a concert on November 3, 2024, at the Maurice Taylor Theatre in Tisdale, and participated in the Tisdale Remembrance Day Program on November 11. They also took part in the Melfort Carol Festival on December 8.

In December, smaller ensembles from the group brought music to local care homes, including Diefenbaker Place in Melfort, Cumberland Villa in Tisdale, and the Arborfield Care Home. Thanks to the generosity of the Tisdale Arts Council, ten free tickets were provided for students to attend the Prairie Sons concert (featuring David Liam Roberts and Godwin Friesen) on March 5. When more students expressed interest, the Arts Council kindly supplied additional tickets.

Members of the group also participated in the Melfort and Nipawin Music Festivals, and the Intermediate Group performed at the Tisdale Band Concert on June 2, 2025. The support of the Saskatchewan Orchestral Association enabled the presentation of scholarships at the Melfort and Nipawin Music Festivals.

Overall, it was a busy and exciting year, filled with performances, community engagement, and valuable learning experiences for all involved.
