

Greater Miami Youth Symphony – 63 Years of Serving Our Community Through Music Programs for Children Ages 5-18

My Musical Journey: The Parking Lot Conversation That Started It All

Ten years ago, at our school parking lot, a mom named Christine told my parents about GMYS's music program. She thought it would be a good fit for my sister. At the time, my sister was only five years old, still in kindergarten. That was when we started our 10-year journey at GMYS.

Since then, we have spent almost all our Sunday afternoons attending rehearsals, jumping from Miami Beach to the MDC Kendall and University of Miami campuses. My sister and I progressed through Preparatory Strings, Young Mozarts, String Orchestra, Concert Orchestra, and Symphony Orchestra, never missing a season.

I firmly believe that music strengthened our cognitive abilities and contributed to our high academic achievements. It also enhanced my overall appreciation of life. Today, I am very grateful to Christine for telling my mom about GMYS. I hope to pass this on to other parents and create more opportunities for kids like me.

Part 1. Studies: How Music Is Instrumental in Accelerating Children's Brain Development and Preventing Old Age Cognitive Decline

Music is excellent for the brain and its development. Numerous studies have shown the positive impact of music on babies before they are even born. It improves creativity in children, boosts academic success in students, fends off depression in adults, and improves the memory of those with dementia. Music is beneficial to people in all stages of life.

Study 1: [USC five-year study](#).

A longitudinal study conducted by the University of Southern California's Brain and Creativity Institute (BCI) concluded that music training induces macro- and microstructural brain changes in school-age children.

To observe how children's behavior and brains changed over time, USC neuroscientists followed nearly three dozen children from low-income neighborhoods in Los Angeles for five years. One group of children learned to play instruments such as violin starting at age 6 or 7, while a second group played soccer. A third did not participate in any specific afterschool programs.

When the scientists compared the groups two years into the study, they found that the budding musicians had more developed auditory pathways, which connect the ear to the brain.

A more developed auditory system can accelerate a child's brain development beyond musical ability. It is also engaged in general sound processing fundamental to language development, reading skills, and successful communication.

Study 2: [Wisconsin 60-year longitudinal study](#).

Another longitudinal study conducted by Stony Brook University in New York concluded that musical instrument engagement in childhood or adulthood is associated with non-musical cognitive reserve. Cognitive reserve refers to the ability to stave off cognitive decline in old age.

Its researchers analyzed 60 years of data of 5,718 individuals. They observed that high school music engagement correlates with higher memory scores at ages 65 and 72. This study provides further evidence of the beneficial association between musical engagement and cognitive reserve, which may help prevent aging diseases like dementia.

Part 2. The Story Behind GMYS

The Greater Miami Youth Symphony (www.gmys.org) was created in 1958 by Robert Strassburg to provide an independent, complementary program to music education in schools. Three years later, Strassburg's orchestra completed a concert tour in Colombia for a cultural exchange program called "Youth for Youth." In November 1972, the orchestra was officially

renamed the Greater Miami Youth Symphony and instituted as a Florida non-profit corporation.

Today, the GMYS is an inclusive year-round, multi-tiered music training program consisting of over 600 students between ages 5 to 18. GMYS offers beginning music classes on most instruments in the modern orchestra. It also has large ensembles comprised of four orchestras, two wind bands, and a jazz band. GMYS features numerous small chamber groups, including jazz combos that perform throughout Miami Dade County and a thriving summer camp program in three locations.

The Greater Miami Youth Symphony strives to enrich the cultural foundation of our community by educating these young musicians not only through rehearsals and performances, but by instilling in them lifelong values such as discipline, teamwork, responsibility, respect, and cultural appreciation.

Part 3. How to Join GMYS

The 2021-2022 Preparatory program offers different levels of band and orchestra classes.

- *For beginner-level students:* the new Miami Youth Action Music Initiative, called MYami Ensembles, is held in these locations: Miami Dade College (Kendall), Riviera Presbyterian Church, Coconut Grove Elementary, St. John's Episcopal Church, Gateway Environmental, Air Base K-8 Center, Somerset Academy, ARC, and Florida City Elementary. Musicians of all skill levels are welcome, and exclusive scholarships are available. The cost of tuition is \$250 for the season. Some locations are free! Scholarships available. All abilities welcome. Parents can find the information on www.gmys.org. Registration form here:
<https://gmys.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Strings-MYami-Application-1.pdf>.
- *Audition time for experienced young musicians for higher-level ensembles:* Saturday and Sunday, August 21 and 22 at Miami Dade College Kendall Campus, Building 8 for move-ups and incoming

students. Address: 11011 SW 104th St, Miami, FL 33176. Audition information is here: <https://gmys.org/gmys-2021-2022-auditions/>



Part 4. A Call to Action for Parents and Students to Share

As a result of GMYS's music programs, our students have a greater appreciation of music and culture, exceptional academic achievement, and a strong sense of community and belonging.

We are looking for families who want to give their kids the opportunity to experience the art of creating music and see these benefits for themselves.

- *To become a friend of GMYS:* <https://gmys.org/gmys-donations/>

Part 5. Media Package Content

- Alumni testimonial
- 2021-2022 Impressions Flyer with donors
- Miami Youth Action Music Initiative
- 2021-2022 season audition flyer
- GMYS El Nuevo Herald article (Spanish and English)
- Videos:
 - o GMYS History Video: <https://gmys.org/history/> (or on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oEUvPvHEiql&t=475s>)
 - o Symphony Trio at Coral Gables Library: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=241193260221779&t=22>
 - o Archived videos: <https://gmys.org/archived-videos/>