MYSO

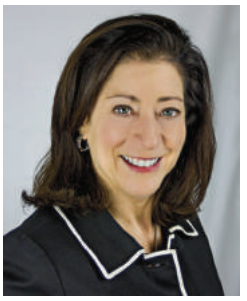
Instrumental in changing lives

MILWAUKEE YOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

MYSO 2015-16 **DONOR IMPACT REPORT**

"Through MYSO, I got to see all these cultures, all these people getting together and making music something big, something important, something our society needs."

- MYSO musician



Welcome

Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra (MYSO) celebrates 60 years of inspiring confident, creative and collaborative young people from diverse backgrounds through music. We nurture commitment, responsibility and dedication to others in order to create beautiful stories in sound together. With our donors' generous support, the 2015–2016 season was filled with musical opportunity:

11-Day International Tour: Continuing a long tradition of touring, our Vienna-Budapest tour took 93 students to some of the world's finest and storied concert halls. We were fortunate to be able to offer the gift of travel through scholarships for 23 students on the tour. Our young musicians performed in four concert halls, which included:

- Vienna's Musikverein, inaugurated in 1870 and the site of the annual Vienna New Year's concert.
- Budapest's Béla Bartók National Concert Hall, opened in 2005 and ranked among the top five concert halls in the world with its outstanding acoustics.

Frank Almond, Concertmaster of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and our 2015-2016 Artist-in-Residence, was the featured soloist on tour.

National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award: We proudly accepted the 2015 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award, the nation's highest honor for out-of-school arts and humanities programs. This award recognizes our innovative Community Partnership Programs (CPP) which were launched in 2003 to support students with barriers of access to music study.

"Each of these programs is using achievement in the arts and humanities as a bridge to achievement in life."

- First Lady Michelle Obama, 2015 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award presentation ceremony

Today CPP serves approximately one third of our 1,000 students in direct music training through diverse programs in classical, jazz, Latin and steel pan ensembles.

Inaugural *Pathways to Success* Gala: Our first *Pathways to Success* Gala brought MYSO musicians, families and guests together to celebrate our national award, our artistic excellence and our 60th anniversary. Our guests, many of whom were newly introduced to our organization and our home through this fundraising event, casually circulated through the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center while talented musicians from our Community Partnership Programs in Jazz Studies, Calypso and Soca (steel pan band) and *Progressions* (strings) performed. We were thrilled with the success of Pathways and plan to make this an annual event.

Shelby Keith Dixon Retires: Senior Symphony Associate Conductor Shelby Keith Dixon retired in May 2016 after 32 years of service. Mr. Dixon helped establish *Progressions*, MYSO's intensive string orchestra program for City of Milwaukee students in 2003, and served as its inaugural administrator for two years. His dry wit brightened many rehearsals and discussions at MYSO! We are eternally grateful to Mr. Dixon for his dedication and substantial contribution to our young musicians and the organization.

Sincerely,

Mike Jordan,
Board Chair

Linda J. Edelstein,
Executive Director

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MYSO'S COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP STUDENTS SAY...

"MYSO has taught me to work hard and to aim for the sky."

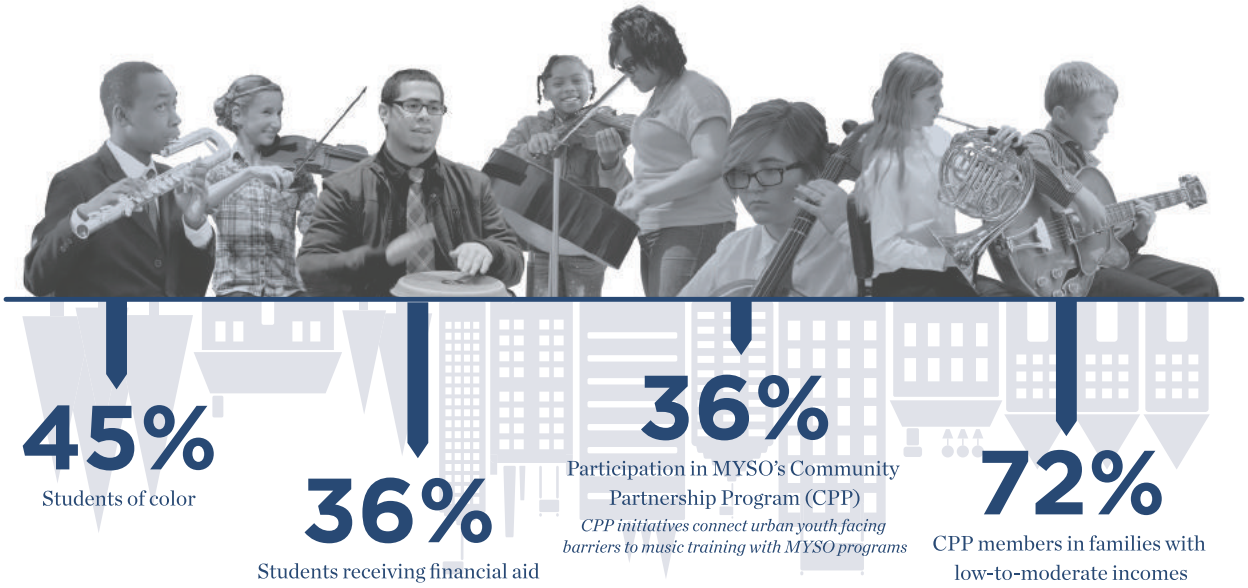
~ Jazz musician

"MYSO has built me as a musician and made me realize that if you bring a group of strangers together it can create a wonderful thing."

~ Calypso musician

MYSO's Purpose:

We empower young people from diverse backgrounds
to joyfully pursue musical excellence...



...while building crucial life skills.

Percentage of MYSO Community Partnership Program students who developed their skills in three core areas

INFUSING LIVES WITH MUSIC

1,000 YOUNG MUSICIANS

215 SCHOOLS

40 ENSEMBLE/ MUSICAL + ENRICHMENT OPTIONS

14 COUNTIES IN SE WI AND NORTHERN IL

8–18 YEARS OF AGE

MYSO Musicians Who Make a Difference in the World

"My teacher at MYSO said to me, 'I heard all of your notes, but not a story.' At that moment, my playing changed. I began to understand that music conveys emotion, that it is a language with the power to connect all of us." *- Domingo Pasillas-Velazquez*

As a nationally-recognized youth arts programming organization, we see bright futures in the making every time our students pick up their instruments. MYSO's Community Partnership Programs exist to open these possibilities to urban students with barriers to access to music study. Two of our talented young musicians, cellist Malik Johnson and violinist Domingo Pasillas-Velazquez, have embraced music as life, finding their own unique inspiration through MYSO. These high school students are poised to make a difference in the world.

Malik Johnson

Malik Johnson: Creating His Own Beats, with Cello

Back in third grade when Malik joined MYSO's *Progressions* Program, he wasn't excited about music. "It wasn't cool to carry my cello at school, and I didn't tell my friends," he says. "I stuck with it because I didn't want to disappoint my parents and teachers. Sometime in these last 10 years, I started playing music for me."

Today, as a senior on scholarship at Pius XI High School, Malik writes his own melodies and uses technology to create fresh new music that integrates cello and hip hop. With music software, Malik records his own cello performance, then loops and layers short sections while he plays over the top. "In MYSO I learned to pursue many forms of music. My dream is to be a professional cellist and a music producer or sound engineer. I can't imagine doing anything else."

Malik is among the first students to complete the entire *Progressions* journey, moving up through several orchestras to Senior Symphony, the highest level, as his musical skill has grown. Malik notes that his experience as a section leader has helped him become a better communicator. Working to learn harder pieces of music has taught him time management. Malik mentors younger MYSO students, and represents MYSO with performances in the community. He also participated in the Vienna-Budapest tour and traveled to the White House to accept the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program award on behalf of MYSO.

"When people see pictures of me with First Lady Michelle Obama, they tend to believe that I was being recognized for my own talents, and that's not the case. There are so many people who work hard every day to keep MYSO and its programs a success, and I was just blessed to be a part of MYSO's journey. I'm honored to call myself a musician here."

Domingo Pasillas-Velazquez

Domingo Pasillas-Velazquez: Connecting through Classical Music

Though Domingo started violin lessons at age three, his passion for classical music didn't emerge right away. Homeschooled with his three siblings in West Bend, his dreams were of sports or law enforcement. When he moved to Milwaukee at age 13, Domingo was accepted into MYSO and things changed. MYSO made ensemble music education financially accessible and provided private teaching support.

"My MYSO teacher said, 'I heard all of your notes, but not a story.' At that moment, my playing changed. I began to understand that music is a language with the power to connect all of us. She encouraged me to see music beyond something to practice. It really opened a door," he adds. "Music allows us to express human experiences we all go through."

Now a junior in high school, Domingo has immersed himself in classical music, and there are not enough hours in the day for him to spend playing, learning, and exploring the background and stories of Beethoven, Bach and other classical composers. He notes that he has developed leadership and collaboration skills, discipline and perseverance. He's learned that hard work in daily practices can lead to larger achievement.

Domingo's younger siblings have also joined MYSO. They frequently play as a quartet for weddings and graduations. The family's strong faith encourages them to play music to serve others. Domingo's favorite venues are nursing homes, hospices, and correctional facilities because he believes that God moves through music. "I see how my grandmother who suffers from Alzheimer's lights up when I play for her. That's what music is all about!"

"My experience with MYSO has changed what I see for my future," he adds. "My ideal would be balancing performances—in the most beautiful concert halls as well as schools and nursing homes—with teaching in a place like MYSO."

Photo of Domingo Pasillas-Velazquez by Victor Domingo Velazquez

WHAT INSPIRES MYSO STUDENTS?

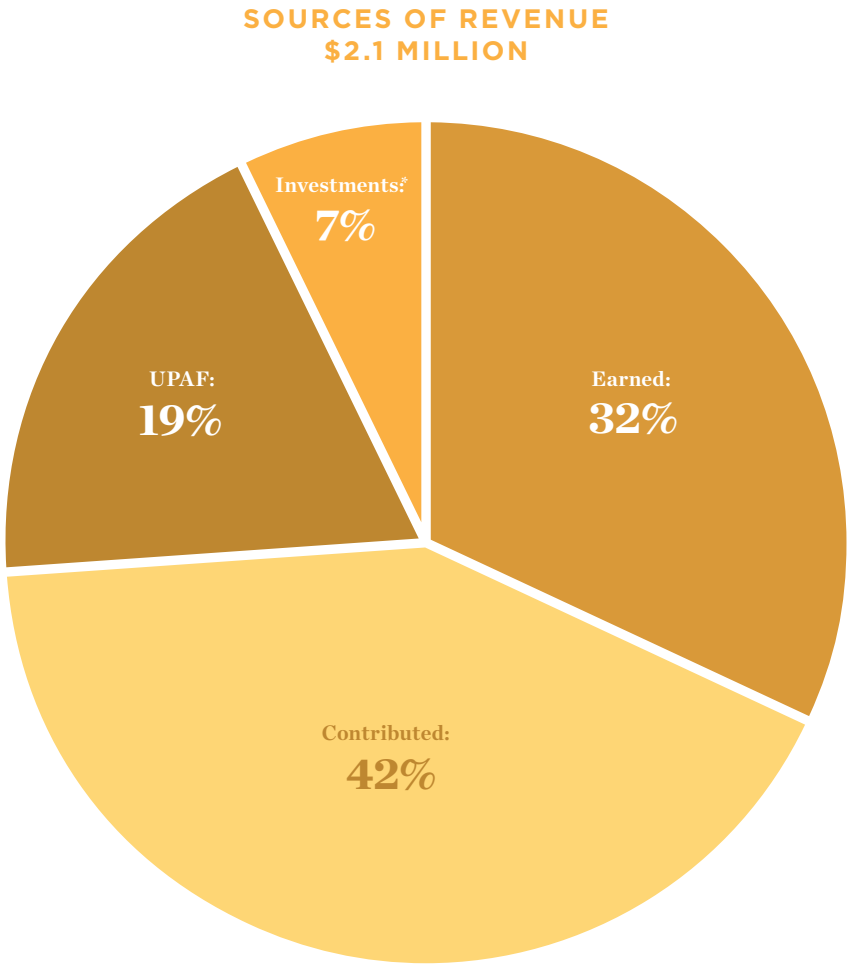
"My favorite thing about MYSO is being able to come to rehearsal and, even though I might be having a bad day, I always feel better after."

- MYSO musician

"MYSO inspires me because it shows me that you don't have to be an adult to play professional music."

- MYSO musician

MYSO Revenue 2015-2016



Expenses totaled just under $2 million, resulting in slightly positive net ordinary income.

Assets in the investment portfolio totaled $6.1 million as of June 30, 2016.

**Investment revenue represents dividend and interest income, net of realized gains and losses.*

Our Deepest Thanks to Our Generous Donors

We are tremendously grateful for these important gifts to MYSO, which support 1,000 young musicians, 40 ensemble and enrichment programs, and allow our programming to be as affordable and accessible as possible.

This list recognizes gifts of $250 or more that were received in the 2015-16 fiscal year **(between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016)**. Our apologies for any omissions or errors. We encourage you to call Development Director, Emily Lukasek, at 414-267-2952 with questions or corrections—or to learn how to make a much-appreciated gift to MYSO.

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Instrumental In Changing Lives Since 1956.

MYSO is one of the most successful and respected youth orchestra programs in the nation, regularly recognized regionally, nationally and internationally for artistic excellence. With 1,000 young musicians from urban, suburban and rural communities throughout southeastern Wisconsin and northern Illinois, it has become one of the largest organizations of its kind in the United States.

MYSO's programs foster critical thinking skills, creativity and collaboration through a constellation of high quality ensemble options, Community Partnership Programs and enrichment activities. Students of all backgrounds have opportunities to participate in symphony and string orchestras, and jazz and steel pan bands, as well as music theory, composition and international tours. Every ensemble provides high quality musical experiences to students at various skill levels.

MYSO's Community Concert Series offers more than 25 free concert performances annually to 5,000 area children, engaging them in a peer-to-peer performance by a MYSO ensemble. The Concert Series, along with MYSO performances in many communities, brings the love of music into all our lives.

myso.org

MYSO

Instrumental in changing lives

MILWAUKEE YOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

325 West Walnut Street
Milwaukee, WI 53212

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