



Play On Philly

CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF MUSIC MAGIC

2025–2026 COMMUNITY REPORT

At **Play On Philly (POP)**, we believe in the power of music education to develop and inspire the behaviors and personal skills needed for a successful life. Since our founding 15 years ago, POP has provided over **3,000 students** in Philadelphia with a transformative music education experience. Our model focuses on the orchestra as a microcosm of our wider community, a place where students can practice life skills such as goal-setting and listening. Students range from pre-Kindergarten to 12th grade and are loaned an orchestral instrument at no cost.

Music education makes a quantifiable difference in a child's life, and we have the data to prove it. **POP students demonstrate higher levels of academic achievement** and better executive functioning skills like determination and focus. Studies show that students with a growth mindset are more likely to respond to challenge with persistence, and our research found a potential for programs like ours to foster in students the belief that their abilities can improve with effort and grow over time.



2025–2026 HIGHLIGHTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The **POP Children's Orchestra** grew thanks to the addition of new in-school winds, brass, and percussion studios at our Universal Alcorn Charter School Music Center.
- The POP Chamber Wind Ensemble performed at Cherry Street Pier and the National Constitution Center for **America250** celebrations and the unveiling of *Let Freedom Ring*, a new art installation by Paul Ramirez Jonas in partnership with the Association for Public Art.
- POP's Advanced String Ensemble had the unique opportunity to work with award-winning violinist **Randall Goosby** before a performance at the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society.
- Our entire community came together to celebrate POP's 15th anniversary with a joyous concert at our 2026 Evening of Harmony. Guest artist **Jonathan Biss** performed alongside multiple Marian Anderson Artists, even playing a student's world premiere composition.
- In February 2026, POP musicians performed with Crescendo Phoenixville at **Camphill Village Kimberton Hills**, whose mission is to create and maintain a land-based community together with adults with developmental disabilities.

2025–2026 YEAR IN NUMBERS

5

MUSIC CENTERS

POP partners with schools in Philadelphia, to provide tuition-free music education: St. Francis de Sales School, Impact Charter School West, Universal Alcorn Charter School, KenCrest Early Learning Center, and Roman Catholic High School.

427

STUDENTS ENROLLED

in our in- and out-of-school time programs across our Music Centers.

12

ANDERSON ARTISTS

The Marian Anderson Young Artist Program provides support to young classical and jazz musicians committed to pursuing a career in music.

117

STUDENTS ENROLLED IN SUMMER PROGRAM

Students from across the city honed their musical skills while also building their creativity through movement, art, and drama.

24

CONCERTS & EVENTS

Our young musicians performed throughout the Philadelphia region in venues including the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, the National Constitution Center, Temple Performing Arts Center, Broad Street Love, and Cherry Street Pier.

20

GUEST ARTISTS

engaged with our young musicians, including Philadelphia's own Revolution Winds, members of the Sphinx Virtuosi, and Jonathan Biss, co-artistic director of the Marlboro Music Festival.

27

HOURS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

for Teaching Artists, including classroom management, child development, pedagogy, cultural equity and inclusion, and training with Dr. Sandra Dackow, a specialist in music for student orchestras.

10

ARTS & COMMUNITY PARTNERS

enriched our students' creative experiences and performances, including ArtWell, Crescendo Phoenixville, BalletX, Philadelphia Wind Symphony, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, and Temple University.

9

MAJOR MEDIA FEATURES

POP students were spotlighted in the media throughout the year, including coverage in Symphony Magazine, PHIL7's Positively Philly, 6ABC's Action News, CBS News, WRTI, and WHY.

MEET VIOLINIST ELLIS

"I wouldn't be a sliver of who I am today if I wasn't in Play On Philly. I couldn't imagine my life without the music I make with incredible people, and I am so grateful for my time in this program, learning, teaching, and leading. I don't know who I would be without it, and I'm so glad I will never have to find out."

Ellis began playing with POP at age 6 as a student at St. Francis de Sales School. They continued to participate in POP's Children's Orchestra and Chamber ensembles for eleven years, taking on the role of section leader and later concertmaster. Ellis starts their first year at Muhlenberg College this fall where they will embark on a Pre-Med track.

2025–2026 ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS

- Violinist **Azia Ross** (Class of 2021) graduated from Howard University's School of Communications with a degree in Journalism. Her writing has appeared on Teen Vogue, Chalkbeat, and the Philadelphia Citizen.
- Saxophonist **Gabrielle Bioteau** (Class of 2019) joined the Play On Philly Board of Directors in 2025. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a B.S.E in Systems Science & Engineering and is now an Engineer at PECO.
- Composer and MAYAP alum **Rhyuhn Green** (Class of 2024) currently studies Composition at The Juilliard School. He recently launched his Virtuoso tour, and he has performance credits with NPR's Tiny Desk, Lincoln Center, and the Philadelphia Ballet among others.
- Clarinetist and MAYAP alum **Zakyya McClenny** (Class of 2025) recently completed her freshman year at the Peabody Institute of John Hopkins University.



The Marian Anderson
**YOUNG
ARTIST**
PROGRAM



EMBARKING ON OUR FIFTH YEAR OF SUPPORTING MUSICAL PATHWAYS

In memory of world-renowned contralto and Philadelphia-daughter, Marian Anderson, Play On Philly launched the **Marian Anderson Young Artist Program (MAYAP)** which supports students, also known as **Anderson Artists**, in their musical studies through private lessons, solo and ensemble performance, instrument loans, and college and career advisement. Started in 2022, the program engages over a dozen young musicians each year tuition-free.

Musicians are placed in two tracks: the **Apprentice** track is for younger musicians who have shown interest in furthering their musical skills, while the **Scholar** track is for high school musicians who want to pursue a career in music and audition for a music-focused college program. A total of 15 Anderson Artists (10 Apprentices and 5 Scholars) ranging from grades 5-12 will participate in the 2026-27 school year.

2025–2026 ANDERSON ARTIST ACTIVITIES

- Our musicians honed their skills in two “Try It Out” Masterclasses with world-class musicians, including Temple University’s **Eric Schweingruber**, and **Ken Larsen** and **Eric Stomberg** from **Interlochen Center for the Arts**.
- 2 Anderson Artists performed alongside acclaimed pianist **Jonathan Biss** at our 2026 **Evening of Harmony** concert. Biss also performed an original composition by one of our Anderson Scholars.
- 5 Anderson Artists participated in Mock Auditions in collaboration with **Interlochen Center for the Arts** and the **Philadelphia Music Alliance for Youth (PMAY)**.
- Anderson Artists performed solo repertoire for friends and family at two Honors Recitals held at the **Episcopal Cathedral** and the **Howard Center for the Arts**.

2025–2026 ANDERSON ARTIST ACHIEVEMENTS

- 4 Anderson Artists participated in intensive summer music programs including **Interlochen Center for the Arts** and the **LA Philharmonic’s YOLA National Festival**.
- Composer **Zihem** * premiered 4 original compositions in a variety of instrument settings including piano and string quartet.
- Pianist **Adam** * was chosen as the Intermediate category winner at the **National Guild of Piano Teachers Auditions**.
- Trumpet players **Robert** ^ and **Tabor** ^ performed with MAYAP alum **Zakyra** in the **Equity Arc Festival Winds Ensemble** under the direction of **Dr. Robert Dorsey** of Florida State University.
- Pianists **Inayah** ^ and **Zihem** * received Gold Medal awards for their performances in the 2025 **Dorothy Sutton Performance Festival**.

KEY: * Apprentice ^ Scholar



2025–2026 GRADUATING SENIORS



DESTINY, Violin
2 Years with POP
Attending Drexel University
for Civil Engineering



DEYANNA, Trumpet
6 years with POP
Attending Kutztown University
for Biology



CASSIA, Cello
13 years with POP
Attending Drexel University
for Chemical Engineering



MALEAH, Viola
3 years with POP
Attending West Chester University
for Music Education



MYA, Trombone
8 years with POP
Attending Mansfield University
for Music Education



ETHAN, Flute
4 years with POP
Attending Eastern University
for Computer Science



ELLIS, Violin
12 years with POP
Attending Muhlenberg College
for Pre-Medicine



MEET TRUMPETER ROBERT

"The arts are one of the reasons Philadelphia has such a strong identity. They preserve the city's history, celebrate its diversity, and inspire future generations to be creative. Without the arts, Philadelphia would lose an important part of what makes it feel alive. They continue to shape the city every day, reminding people that creativity has the power to educate, inspire, and bring communities together."

Robert joined POP through the Marian Anderson Young Artist Program in 2024. He has performed in the POP Chamber Orchestra, as well as the Philadelphia All-City Orchestra. Robert is the recipient of the 2026 Edwin A. Fleisher Collection Scholarship presented by the Free Library of Philadelphia, and he will study Music at Temple University this fall.



JOIN US FOR ANOTHER AMAZING YEAR OF MUSIC EDUCATION

We hope to see you at a concert this year!
Visit playonphilly.org/events for our full calendar of performances.

To support our mission with a tax-deductible gift, use the QR code above or visit playonphilly.org/donate.

Thank you for being an instrumental part of our success over the years. It takes everyone in the Play On Philly community to help young people in Philadelphia build incredible futures.