

# YOLA National

YOLA National Festival

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

## **BASIC INFORMATION**

### **What is YOLA National?**

YOLA National brings together those who believe that music education has a powerful role to play in youth and community development. Designed to respond to the changing needs of the field, YOLA National offers an ever-growing number of opportunities for young musicians, teaching artists, program administrators, and other stakeholders to learn from and to create community with one another. Through this work, the LA Phil aims both to empower young people from populations that have been historically excluded from intensive music training and to foster a dialogue among practitioners that will help shape the future of the field.

### **What is the YOLA National Festival?**

The **YOLA National Festival** is an opportunity for students from El Sistema-inspired and aligned programs throughout the United States to perform as part of a top-tier national youth orchestra. By offering young people the opportunity to learn from exceptional musicians, including world-renowned conductors and guest artists, students become ambassadors of their programs and engage with young people from diverse regions and backgrounds. The festival orchestra aims to develop a model for excellence and a national community of citizen musicians from historically excluded populations in the United States. Students will not only have access to top artistic and educational resources, but will also experience some of the world's finest learning institutions and concert venues.

### **What ensembles participate in the YOLA National Festival?**

This year's festival will feature two ensembles: a **Symphony Orchestra** for the most advanced musicians, open to students aged 14-18, and an **Overture Orchestra** that is an opportunity for musicians aged 12-14. All students will have the opportunity to learn from a faculty of world-class artists and to rehearse and perform at Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

### **What is the history of YOLA National?**

YOLA National is the next phase in the evolution of the LA Phil's investment in progressive music education under the leadership of Music and Artistic Director Gustavo Dudamel, who is a product and champion of the El Sistema youth orchestra movement.

The LA Phil introduced the Sistema-inspired YOLA program in 2007. The program's influence grew rapidly, and in 2012, the Take a Stand initiative—a partnership between the LA Phil and Longy School of Music of Bard College—was introduced to promote social change through music on a national stage. The initiative resulted in an annual convening of Sistema-inspired music educators, a Masters of Arts in Teaching degree program, and in 2015, the creation of the student-centered National Take a Stand Festival.

In 2018 the LA Phil introduced YOLA National in order to unify and expand upon these activities, with the exception of the Masters of Arts in Teaching degree program, which continues to be administered by the Longy School of Music of Bard College, now in partnership with Heart of Los Angeles (HOLA) and Street Symphony. Under the "YOLA National" umbrella, the LA Phil seeks to be a nimble and expert resource for the field, continuing to host annual convenings for educators and students, but also introducing new programs and entering into new partnerships that respond to the changing needs of the field.

## DATES & LOGISTICS

### **What are the important dates?**

November 17, 2023	Application Opens
February 16, 2024	Priority Deadline
March 1, 2024	Final Deadline - Application close
March 8, 2024	Recommendation Due
March 27, 2024	Notification distributed to applicants
July 2024	YOLA National Festival

### **How will travel be arranged?**

Travel, lodging, and meals will be provided for all students, at no cost. A representative of the LA Phil will work with a travel agent to book all travel for students. In doing so, they will ensure that students are appropriately chaperoned during travel transitions.

### **Where will students be staying?**

Students will stay in dorms. Great care will be taken to ensure safety and accountability in these locations.

### **What if my child has special dietary restrictions or needs special accommodations?**

We will do our best to accommodate all students to ensure that they have as healthy and positive an experience as possible.

## STAFFING

### **Who will the teaching artists be?**

A specially selected group of artists will serve as the teaching faculty and will share their talents as artists and mentors throughout the festival.

### **What steps will be taken to keep students safe?**

Students will be carefully attended to throughout their time at the Festival. An experienced residential life staff will ensure that students have the supervision and support they need.

### **Can a parent, teaching artist, or program director chaperone a student during the festival?**

No. The festival will be fully staffed (24 hours) with adults responsible for students' musical growth, social well-being, and safety. While parents and adults are welcome to travel with students and attend the final concert, only those staff hired as music faculty and residential life staff are permitted to be present during the days of the festival to ensure the safety of all students.

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## ELIGIBILITY

### **Is my student eligible to attend?**

Students applying for the YOLA National Festival Orchestras must meet program and age requirements in order to be eligible to participate. These requirements are explained below.

### **PROGRAM REQUIREMENT:**

Students must be enrolled in a music program that is either directly inspired by El Sistema, or in a program similarly invested in youth empowerment. While each El Sistema-inspired or aligned program operates differently, there are basic tenets associated with such programs which this Festival aims to support. All programs must meet **at least 5 of the following 8 criteria below**.

1. Students are playing music on their primary orchestral instrument in the program for at least 5 hours per week.
2. Central to the mission of the program is music as a vehicle for social change and youth or community development.
3. Programming is free or full scholarships are given to at least 80% of all students.
4. The program provides a multi-year commitment to students, offering support from childhood through the end of high school and/or adulthood.
5. The program emphasizes ensemble-based orchestral programming (students are learning in groups).
6. Students' success is evaluated not only on musical progress, but also on behavioral development.
7. The program has key individual or institutional partners that provide expertise in music, community, youth, and social development.
8. The program is a member of a national or regional organization that is a network for self-identified.
9. El Sistema-inspired programs (for example: YOLA, El Sistema Colorado, El Sistema USA). A list of El Sistema based programs can be found [here](#). Programs not on this list must be evaluated by the YOLA team by sending an email to [YOLA@laphil.org](mailto:YOLA@laphil.org)
- 10.

## **AGE REQUIREMENT**

- A. Symphony Orchestra:** High school musicians (please note musicians must be enrolled in high school or in their summer after their senior year) between the ages 14-18 may apply to the Symphony Orchestra. This is a highly competitive ensemble, open to the most advanced players from Sistema-inspired and aligned programs from across the country. Excerpts for the Symphony Orchestra can be found on our [Audition Requirements page](#). Applicants who are 14 years old and apply to the Symphony Orchestra will automatically be considered for the Overture Orchestra.
- B. Overture Orchestra:** Musicians aged 12-14 are eligible for the Overture Orchestra. Musicians who are 14 years old can either apply for the Symphony Orchestra, and be considered for both orchestras, or choose to apply only for the Overture Orchestra. Excerpts for the Overture Orchestra can be found on our [Audition Requirements page](#).

If you have questions regarding student/program eligibility, please contact [yola@laphil.org](mailto:yola@laphil.org).

## SELECTION

### **What are the criteria for choosing students?**

A professional panel will review all audition materials and consider factors including diversity in age, program, and geographic location, proficiency and musicality on the instrument, and alignment of students' personal statement with the Festival's goals. String players age 14 who apply for the Symphony Orchestra will be automatically considered for the Overture Orchestra if not selected for the Symphony Orchestra.

### **Will the same students who participated in the 2023 festival participate in the 2024 festival?**

While past participants who are still eligible to apply may be accepted, they must re-apply to be considered for the 2024 Festival. All applicants will be evaluated using the same criteria.