

PYSO String Rotation Memo

As part of giving you a taste of the professional world, you will see that as a PYSO member is rotation within the string sections. Many world-class orchestras, including the PSO, are beginning to rotate string players so they have an opportunity to play in every part of the section. There are no permanently assigned seats except for principals, co-principals, and assistant principals (the “titled” chairs). Too often, young players are worried about how “high” or “low” they are sitting in a section. That may be a way to keep a high school orchestra motivated, but by being accepted into PYSO, you have shown the qualities needed to be a strong player no matter where you sit in the orchestra. Throughout the season, you will have an opportunity to contribute from every part of the section. We realize this will come as a big change to many of you and so we have prepared a short FAQ document that should answer many of your questions and concerns. The bottom line is that you are a team, and a team is only as good as the sum of all its players.

String Rotation FAQ

Why are we using rotation?

Many major US orchestras (New York, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Milwaukee, etc.) have begun rotating players in their string sections to create a more balanced sound throughout the section and keep players active and interested during the year. From a pedagogical perspective, it is even more important for a youth orchestra to use rotation so that every player has an opportunity to play in every part of their section. Playing in an orchestra is a team effort and every orchestra is only as strong as the sum of *all* its players. Placing the strongest players only in the front of a section does not encourage the style of teamwork we will be expecting.

How will rotation work?

Depending on the size of the section, players behind the co-principals (who will stay at the first stand), will rotate 3 or 5 seats forward at intermission. Because our current auditions are for the fall (Heinz Hall) concert, every player will be playing in two different positions (Fall 1st half, Fall 2nd half).

How will the initial seating be decided?

With the goal being a balanced string section from front to back, the coaches and music director will keep notes on each player’s strengths and weaknesses. Some players have extraordinarily big sounds, or clear articulation, or very strong rhythm. Our goal will be to spread similar players around the section so that the same balance will be kept even when the players rotate.

Is there an order for seating or ranking within a section?

No string rotation order is more important than any other. The order for the first half of the first concert (or any other) does not imply a ranking of players within a section.

How will seating auditions for the fall concert work?

Blind seating auditions will be held on Saturday, September 8 from 10 AM to 5 PM. The schedule will be determined in August. Music and music excerpts will be emailed as a pdf file to string players by the week of July 9th. The seating rotation will be posted at the first rehearsal on September 9.

Why do seating auditions matter if everyone is rotating?

Seating auditions are still important for two reasons. Firstly, they determine concertmasters/principals. Secondly, they ensure the standard of playing in the orchestra. Each player is responsible to the rest of the orchestra and owes it to their colleagues to be prepared. Please note that players not adequately prepared for their initial seating audition may be required to play a second seating audition.

How will I know how good my seating audition was?

Talk to the Maestro and he will be happy to provide feedback on your audition. Our hope is that you will hold yourself to your own high standard rather than whether you are better and worse than another player.