



TORONTO COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA

September

2026

This document is intended to be a guide for members and potential members as to the mission, goals, procedures and plans of the Toronto Community Orchestra.

Members
Handbook

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Toronto Community Orchestra (TCO) is an ensemble with an over 50-year history of performances and service to our city, and in particular to Seniors' Residences. We strive to perform music which will provide accessibility, challenge, and growth for our individual musicians as well as for the orchestra as a whole, in addition to offering our audiences variety, interest, and pleasure.

OBJECTIVES

- To create and maintain a non-profit, volunteer community orchestra
- To offer qualified amateur instrumentalists from Toronto and surrounding communities an opportunity to perform orchestral music. The orchestra is for the most part non-auditioned, with some exceptions at the discretion of the Conductor, Section Principals and Executive committee. These exceptions *may* include section principal positions in the string sections and section principal positions in the wind sections.
- To offer freely accessible concerts to the community and to the residents of Long-Term Care Facilities in Toronto.

REPERTOIRE

The Toronto Community Orchestra plays music from different styles, genres, and musical eras. To give an idea of the level of music we play, visit the ["Performance" page](#) of our website and our [YouTube channel](#) for a sample of our repertoire.

We also endeavour to accommodate orchestra members with aspirations to play concertos. Anyone who may be interested in playing a concerto with the orchestra will need to speak to the Artistic Director and the Repertoire committee at least one full term in advance of the desired performance time. (E.g., for a December performance the conversation must take place in the previous May at the latest.)

ORCHESTRA EXECUTIVE

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| • Conductor/Artistic Director (ex-officio): | Nicolo Arrigo |
| • Co-Chair: Administration & Member Services | Paniz Ghazanfari |
| • Co-Chair: Operations & Communications | Fong Di Caterina |
| • Treasurer | Benno Sommer |
| • Music Coordinator/Librarian: Procurement, arrangement & distribution | Brendon Phillips |
| • Web Designer & Developer: | Tina Kresse |
| • Graphic Designer/Advertising: | Sharon Scanlan |
| • Outreach and Web editor | John Clark |

COMMUNICATIONS

The Co-Chair-Operations & Treasurer creates a contact list of all TCO members and distributes or provides access to the Conductor, the Executive, the Concertmaster and Section Leaders, in order to facilitate the dissemination of

information. A Co-Chair may also send the orchestra contact list to all orchestra members, provided permission is given by each orchestra member.

FEES

The fees are by term (2 terms per season) and must be paid in full for each term by the first or second rehearsal of the term. Fees may be paid in cash, by cheque, or e-transfer.

- \$140 for fall term (September – December)
- \$160 for winter/spring term (January – May)
- Cheques are to be made payable to “Toronto Community Orchestra”
- E-transfers must include an additional \$1.25 to cover the bank fee and are to be sent to torontoco.treasurer@gmail.com

If full fee payment poses a hardship, please email the Treasurer to request a 50% discount. Fees cover the rental of the rehearsal space at Danforth Tech CI, the concert venue, honoraria, music purchases and rentals, printing/photocopying, insurance, and general orchestral expenses.

REHEARSALS

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

We rehearse on Tuesday evenings and also schedule our performances on Tuesday evenings. Occasionally, under special circumstances, we will schedule a performance for a different day and time, other than Tuesday evenings. These concerts will only take place if enough people are able to commit to the date in question. On occasion, our usual rehearsal space is required for another function and we try to schedule a rehearsal at an alternative location.

- Rehearsals: First Term: Sept – early Dec
- Rehearsals: Second Term: Jan – early May
- For 2026-27 the rehearsals begin on September 15 with the end of session concert on December 8. The second session begins on January 12, 2027 with the end of session concert on May 11, 2027.

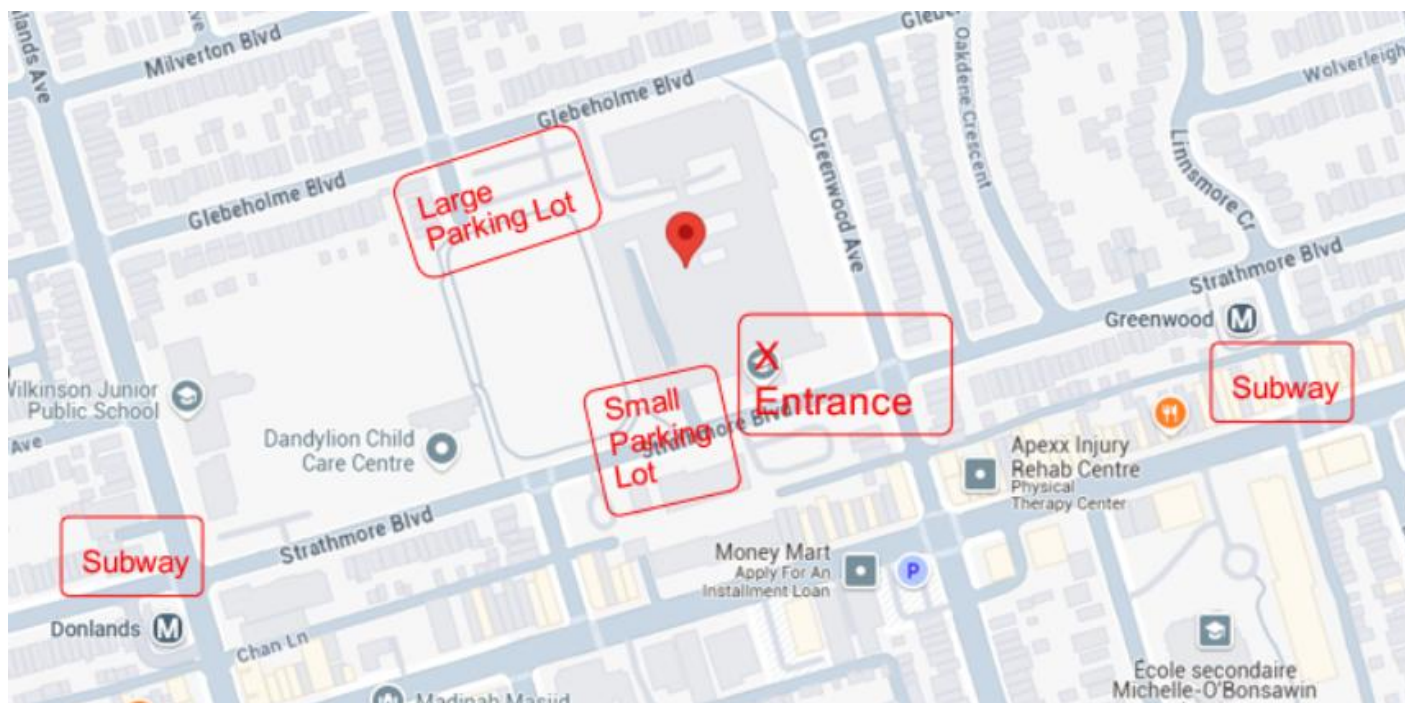
REHEARSAL INFORMATION

Rehearsal Location: 800 Greenwood Ave, Toronto (at Greenwood and Danforth), Room B66 (Band room)

Entrance: Side doors on Strathmore Ave.

Closest subway station: Greenwood (about 3 min walk) - turn left on Linsmore to get to Strathmore Blvd and walk westward (another left).

Parking: A small parking lot on the south side, a large parking lot on the north west side but it'll be a longish walk to the entrance (do not try to go through the school even if the doors are open as it's a maze), and street parking.



Rehearsal Times:

We start promptly at 7:30 pm

- Orchestra members should try to arrive around 7:15 pm, in order to help set up chairs, tune, and warm up
- One 10-minute break – at the Conductor's discretion
- Rehearsal ends at 9:30 pm and members are asked to return the room to the order in which it was found.
- Members are required to register and note their attendance on [Gig-o-matic](#) as this greatly assists in the rehearsal planning
- **Rehearsal Order:** Each week, orchestra members will receive by email the rehearsal order from the Conductor/Co-Chair-Operations. Music should be put into the correct order IN ADVANCE of the rehearsal to save time finding music during the rehearsal.

TDSB SPACE USE

We apply through the Permit Unit at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) to use 800 Greenwood Ave (aka Danforth Tech Collegiate Institute) on most Tuesday evenings. Our permit is from 7:15 pm until 10:00 pm so that there is time for set-up, 2 hours of rehearsal and clean-up at the end. We must be off the premises by 10:00 pm. The space rental is booked in advance in August for the entire season, and paid monthly by pre-authorized payment.

The school reserves the right to use the space on any given night. Occasionally there will be an event taking place at Danforth Tech which will preclude our rehearsing there. Every effort will be taken to find an alternate venue to rehearse, and members will be notified as early as possible by email.

The caretakers ensure that entrance to the building at the designated door is only open between 7:00 and 7:45 for the safety of all occupants inside the building.

We are required to abide by all of the [rules and regulations](#) set by TDSB for safe and responsible use of their facility. We carry third party liability insurance, which is also a requirement to use the space.

REHEARSAL SPACE SET UP

Please arrive at rehearsal by 7:15 pm so that you can help with the orchestra set up. All musicians, at the end of the rehearsal, must help to return the space to the order in which it was found. Your help at the conclusion of the rehearsal (especially if you are unable to help in set up) would be appreciated.

The music room at Danforth Tech should be rearranged to the following layout at the end of each rehearsal (even if the chairs/stands were not necessarily found in this set up on any given Tuesday):

1. THREE rows of chairs with stands (ideally, using chairs labelled "music room");
 - a. Front row (closest to conductor): 10 chairs/stands
 - b. Second row: 9 chairs/stands
 - c. Third row: 11 chairs/stands
2. All chairs labelled "Drama Room" returned to the Drama room next door;
3. Extra chairs and stands stacked neatly in the far right hand corner (where the stairs and back door is);
4. Teacher's desk set approx. 8 feet away from the front wall, with the projector cart against the left side of the desk;
5. Piano horizontally set away from the wall on the right side of the teacher's desk (with a large gap in between);
6. Drums sets about 5 feet away from the back wall.



REHEARSAL EXPECTATIONS

We all come to enjoy ourselves by making music, to grow in our music-making capabilities, and to enjoy the company of others who share those objectives. The following guidelines are designed to ensure that we can make this happen:

General

- Members are expected to attend all rehearsals, practice between sessions, learn the music, and strive to improve their musical skills and intonation to the best of their ability for the orchestra's overall quality.
- The Conductor, in consultation with the Concertmaster and Section Leaders, determines section placement and seating.
- Rehearsals begin promptly at 7:30 pm with a tuning pitch. Please arrive by 7:15 pm to assist with setup and ensure your stand and music are ready. Late arrivals disrupt the rehearsal, though arriving late is better than not attending at all—occasional tardiness is understandable.
- Any necessary announcements will be made by Executive Committee members either after tuning or at the start of the break. Orchestra members may also make announcements at this time.
- Please keep socializing to the break. Be in your seat and ready to tune when the Concertmaster signals.
- If you're not required for a piece being rehearsed at the end, exit quietly to avoid disrupting others.
- Always check your email on Tuesdays before rehearsal for any last-minute updates (e.g., cancellations or venue changes).

Rehearsal pointers

- Add measure numbers to the start of each line of music before the first rehearsal.
- Bring all necessary items: music, instrument (in good working order), stand, pencil, and accessories (rosin, spare reed, mute, etc.).
- Record bowings and musical directions as instructed. String Section Leaders will distribute bowings and send revisions during the term —add them before the next rehearsal.
- **Do not play/practice or talk while the Conductor is speaking, especially when another section is being advised.** Others cannot hear the Conductor if you are talking or practicing, no matter how quietly you think you're whispering or playing.
- Ensure you and your stand partner have enough space and can see both the music and the Conductor. Adjust your stand height so that the Conductor is in your peripheral view.
- Tune at mezzo piano volume to allow others to hear. Avoid talking during tuning.
- Communicate with your stand partner as quietly as possible. Assist anyone next to you who requires assistance in hearing instructions from the Conductor.
- If you have questions about something in the score or how a passage should be played, raise your hand and ask the Conductor during rehearsal or approach your Section Leader during a break.
- For shared stands, the inside player (or player further from the edge of the stage) turns pages. Players on the outside (closest to the edge of the stage) play the top line of a divisi section, while the inside player plays the bottom, unless otherwise directed by the Conductor or Section Leader.
- Stop playing immediately when the Conductor stops.
- Silence your phone or put it to airplane mode.

ATTENDANCE & MUSIC

Attendance

- Prioritize rehearsal attendance. Your presence affects your stand partner, section, and the orchestra's balance.
- The Conductor communicates important things each rehearsal and therefore consistent attendance is crucial. Attendance at rehearsals leading up to a concert is especially important. If you must miss a rehearsal, please check with others in your section for any changes made.
- Attendance must be indicated using [Gig-o-matic](#) which is set up by the Co-Chair-Operations. This is essential for the Conductor to plan rehearsals.
- If you anticipate missing rehearsals (due to travel, family, or work), update Gig-o-matic and email the Conductor. A substitute may be needed.
- The Conductor may ask members with irregular attendance to sit out a concert.
- If you cannot play a scheduled concert, notify the Conductor, Section Leader, and Co-Chair, Operations as early as possible and help arrange a sub.
- If regular attendance becomes difficult, consider discussing a leave of absence with the Co-Chair, Administration & Member Services.

Music

- Music will be distributed to members well before the commencement of the term as a PDF file for each member to print or download.
- Ensure your music includes bar numbers or rehearsal numbers before rehearsals begin.
- String bowings are usually sent by email—contact your Section Leader for details.
- Repertoire is selected to include all instruments when possible, but this may not always be feasible. The Conductor will try to minimize downtime for those not playing in every piece. Your patience is appreciated.

CONCERTS

Family, Friends & Community Concerts:

Location announced once booked.

Outreach Concerts: Usually at New Horizons Tower. Detailed information will be communicated to all members via email the week before each away concert (i.e., at Long-term care homes).

We have occasionally partnered with other community organizations to perform for their concert series or in fundraisers that jointly benefit their organization and our orchestra. Unlike our regularly scheduled performances each season, these events may not take place on Tuesday evenings. Members will be asked to indicate whether they would be available to participate in these extra concerts, and if sufficient members are willing to commit, we will accept the invitation.

CONCERT SCHEDULE

- All Concerts take place on Tuesday evenings; first term concerts take place in early December, and second term concerts in early May.
- Please refer to the TCO Website (<https://torontocommunityorchestra.org/>) for exact dates, times, and locations for our upcoming concerts.
- Note: there is a dress rehearsal after the Outreach Concert each term and before the Family and Friends Concerts at the concert venue

CONCERT DRESS

Unless otherwise specified,

- For concerts at Seniors' Homes: ALL BLACK
 - For Family, Friends & Community concerts as well as any Fundraiser Concerts: ALL BLACK
- Optional: Men may wear black suit, white shirt, and black bow tie.

CONCERT ATTENDANCE

Attendance at all Tuesday Night Concerts is mandatory. Orchestra members NOT able to play a scheduled concert should notify the Conductor and their section leader as soon as possible and work with them to find a sub if necessary.

CONCERT VENUE

We have a rental lease with the concert venue for use of their Sanctuary for the two dress rehearsals and the two concerts we hold. We have the Sanctuary from 6 or 7 pm until 10 pm so that there is time for set-up, rehearsal/concert time, and clean-up at the end. We must be off the premises by 10 pm. The space rental is paid in advance of each term of use.

The custodians ensure that the stage area is set up for our dress rehearsals and concerts by 6 pm.

We are required to abide by all of the rules that the concert venue requires for safe and responsible use of their facility. We carry third party liability insurance, which is also a requirement to use the space.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

TBC

ANNUAL FEEDBACK SURVEY

In January/early February of each year, members are asked for feedback on a range of issues including the repertoire and level, number of concerts, fees, and other issues pertaining to the functioning of the orchestra. Issues requiring immediate attention can be identified at this time and measures taken to resolve them before the season is over. Results of the survey are tabulated and presented at the Annual General Meeting.

WEBSITE

Information regarding rehearsal and concert schedules can be found on the orchestra website:

<https://torontocommunityorchestra.org/>

CONTACTS

The Executive Committee Co-Chairs can be reached at torontocommunityorchestra@gmail.com

APPENDIX: Orchestra Position Descriptions

Artistic Director/Conductor

The Artistic Director (AD) works with the orchestra's executive committee to provide the artistic vision of The Toronto Community Orchestra and is responsible for the leadership and direction of every aspect of the performances by the orchestra. The Artistic Director works with all members of the administrative team in the organization of the orchestra.

Artistic Management

- Provides overall artistic leadership and direction to the orchestra, and soloists, as required.
- Chooses repertoire appropriate for the orchestra and concert venues, in consultation and collaboration with the repertoire team, the section principals, orchestra members (via annual survey results) and concert venues, if applicable.
We have a modest electronic music library mainly of seasonal music and music not available in the public domain. We usually avail ourselves of music from the online IMSLP (Petrucci) Public Domain Website. Sometimes we are able to borrow or rent music from other orchestra libraries. We have a modest budget for purchasing music when that is the only option available.
- The year is divided into two terms, with different repertoire programmed for each.
The repertoire should amount to a maximum of one hour and 15 minutes of music for our Family and Friends concerts, (the length of our concerts in the Long Term Care Homes is usually 45 minutes to a maximum of one hour). The AD may choose to include soloists, or vocal groups where appropriate, as part of our Family and Friends concerts.
- In consultation with the Concertmaster, the Membership Recruitment Coordinator, and with section heads as appropriate, reviews and participates in the selection of potential orchestra members in key positions, for example the Concertmaster, section heads and key brass and wind players. The Membership Recruitment Coordinator is responsible for corresponding with and responding to potential members by either putting them on the waiting list or letting them know of their acceptance and coordinating the communication between the AD and potential key players.
- Conducts all weekly rehearsals and concerts (Tuesdays from 7:30-9:30 pm) for an approximately nine-month season from Sept to mid-May (see contract for current year dates). This includes:
 - at least two concerts at Long Term Care Homes (in accordance with public health restrictions, the opportunity for the orchestra to be able to perform in such institutions and the orchestra's volunteer capacity to organize such concerts),
 - one December Family and Friends concert and one May Family and Friends concert,
 - any special event concerts as directed by the orchestra's administrative team.
- Provides rehearsal order before the weekend prior to the next rehearsal, unless it is during a planned absence, for which the rehearsal order is determined in coordination with or by the substitute conductor.
- Leads the appropriate section of the orchestra (according to the AD's expertise) for sectionals as scheduled each year.

- Collaborates with any sectional coaches or substitute conductors to ensure the efficiency and smooth running of these rehearsals.
- communicates with sectional coach(es) and/or the CM after sectionals to ensure that the training received and practised (e.g. bowings, phrasing, dynamics etc) in sectionals are continued with consistency during full rehearsals.

Executive Relations

- Participates as an ex-officio member of the administrative team, except when regarding their own human resource matters.
- Participates in an annual review after the annual survey with the Chair or Co-chairs.

Human Resources

- Attendance or performance concerns regarding any orchestra member or any other human resources issues must be relayed to the Co-Chair Administration and Member Services or the Co-Chair, Operations. immediately upon the AD having a concern or being informed of a reason for concern.
- Planned absences for any rehearsals or concerts must be communicated to the Co-chairs as soon as possible so substitution can be planned accordingly.
- If the Artistic Director decides not to return for the next season, this decision must be communicated to the Co-chair for Administration and Member Services as soon as possible and at the latest by February 15th of the current season in order that a search for a new Artistic Director can be completed successfully and in a timely manner.
- The orchestra will pay the Artistic Director an annual honorarium paid in two installments, at the completion of each term. This honorarium is flexible and is ultimately determined by the orchestra's income and expenses in any given year.

Public Relations

- Serves on some occasions as a spokesperson for the orchestra.
- Represents the orchestra in any programs, which are produced jointly with other organizations.
- Helps to recruit extra musicians for concerts if needed (small honorariums are usually available to pay U of T students for example to help out with concerts) for parts that are deemed to be essential but for which we do not have a member instrumentalist. The honorariums must fall within the budget for this, and any special circumstances should be discussed with the Co-Chair Operations and the Treasurer.

Concertmaster

- Provide input to the Orchestra's administrative team as requested and to offer a perspective on the orchestra's development.
- Provide leadership for the orchestra while playing, through expressive and emotive body language, and cuing entries and transitional sections.
- In consultation with the conductor, the strings sectional coach and other string principals, decide on bowings and articulations, along with overall interpretation and style.
- Share bowings and articulations with principals of all string sections prior to the commencement of the rehearsals.
- Keep principals up to date on any bowing or articulation changes.

- Play solo violin parts or designate another member to play a specific solo part.
- Assist the strings sectional coach in leading String sectionals as requested.
- Be approachable so members can come to you for help.
- Be available to participate on the repertoire team and to provide input to the artistic director and the repertoire team in the choice of repertoire, its suitability for the violin section, and to assess the degree of difficulty for the TCO strings and whether or not the music would be a suitable challenge or too challenging, and whether any overly difficult areas might be simplified for the less advanced players.
- Assist the Artistic Director during rehearsals with issues relating to string technique, such as fingering, bowing, intonation, style, etc. For example, may stand and demonstrate during the rehearsal to aid in obtaining the result for which the conductor is asking.
- Identify troublesome areas and help the strings with suggestions of fingering, bowing techniques, etc. Respond to individuals who may identify troublesome areas. Offer and demonstrate simplified versions if necessary for less advanced players.

String Section Principals

- Provide leadership for the section while playing, through expressive and emotive body language, cuing entries and transitions.
- After checking the bowings of the Concertmaster (who will decide in consultation with the principals and will share bowings with Principals of all string sections), will provide bowings and articulations to their sections.
- Keep their section regularly up to date with bowing and other changes.
- Help the section during rehearsals with issues relating to technique, such as fingering, bowing, intonation, style, etc. If the conductor is asking something musical of a section, they may stand and demonstrate to aid the conductor.
- Lead 'Small Group' sectionals if requested.
- Identify troublesome areas and help with suggestions of fingering, bowing, etc.
- Respond to individuals who may identify troublesome areas.
- Offer technical tips and advice through demonstration.
- Give advice on bowing, touch, articulation, etc. so as to achieve the particular style of playing asked for by the conductor.
- Outline and demonstrate simplified versions if necessary for some members.
- Play designated solos.
- Be approachable so that members can come to the principal for help, in person or by email.
- Notify the Membership Coordinator when there are vacancies to be filled.

Wind Section Principals

- Provide leadership for the section while playing, through expressive and emotive body language.
- Help the section with tips on articulation and tonguing techniques
- Help the section with tips on how to achieve good intonation
- Help the section with tips on breathing techniques and air support
- Help the section with parts needing transposition

- Play designated solos as required
- Lead 'Small Group' sectionals, helping other players with any difficulties they may be having.
- One Wind principal should participate in the Repertoire team each season
- Notify the Membership Coordinator when there are vacancies to be filled.

Stage Manager

- Ensure the rehearsal space is returned to its intended layout at the end of each rehearsal.
- On the days of the dress rehearsal and concert, arrive early to ensure that the audio/speaker system and at least one working microphone are provided, that the concert stage, podium, and music stand for the conductor are set up appropriately. Additional mics may be necessary for piano or soloists.
- Ensure that any of the orchestra's timpani, percussion instruments, and keyboard are ready at the concert or rehearsal venues at the direction of the Artistic Director.
- Organize TCO Timpani Moving Crew to move the timpani to the concert venue for dress rehearsal and return to Danforth Tech after the concert
- Communicate with the concert venue in advance to arrange a moving date if outside of dress rehearsal and concert evenings.
- Work with the Music Coordinator and Percussionist to ensure the TCO owned instruments are appropriately tracked/stored.
- Other tasks which pertain to the staging as required.

Repertoire Team

Members

- Leader: Artistic Director
- Concertmaster
- Representatives from string sections
- Music Coordinator
- Co-Chairs, Executive Committee
- If possible, at least one member of the orchestra with background in the repertoire for community orchestras or participation in or having led similar orchestral groups.

Repertoire Planning Guidelines

Member Suggestions

All orchestra members are encouraged to suggest repertoire suitable for a community orchestra. While member input—such as survey responses—is valuable and must be considered, it does not solely determine repertoire choices. Members may not always be able to assess whether a piece is appropriate for the orchestra's current skill level.

Repertoire Criteria

- All selected music must be written for orchestra.

- Programming should include:
 - Accessible classical repertoire appropriate for the orchestra's abilities.
 - Varied selections that appeal to different age groups and interests, such as film scores or musical theatre medleys.
 - Major pieces must include all instruments
 - Orchestral variety is important, but selections must still be orchestral in nature.

Balancing Challenge and Accessibility

Repertoire should:

- Provide musical challenges for advanced players
- Allow section leaders to simplify difficult passages for less experienced players

Concert Programming

- Decide whether to have a theme for each concert, one concert, or none at all.
- Avoid featuring the same composer in both concerts of a season. With so many composers available, variety is preferred.
- Identify which pieces will not be performed at LTC homes, as those concerts are limited to 45–60 minutes, while regular concerts may run up to 75 minutes.
- Consider including:
 - A soloist, especially one from within the orchestra
 - Seasonal music (both traditional and contemporary) for the December concert.
 - A dedicated piece for each of the string and wind/brass sections

Decision-Making Process

- Final repertoire decisions rest with the Artistic Director (AD), but consensus within the Committee is encouraged in keeping with the community orchestra spirit.
- Deadlines:
 - Fall concert repertoire must be finalized by June 30.
 - Spring concert repertoire must be finalized by October 30.
 - These timelines allow the Music Coordinator and volunteers sufficient time to source and distribute music.

Additional Considerations

Other relevant ideas or concerns may be raised and discussed by the group during the planning process.