

Nationally recognized youth orchestra performs at Education Week

By [Jacqueline Epeneter](#) - August 17, 2015, The Daily Universe

They have played with talented musicians and artists such as The Piano Guys, William Joseph and David Archuleta. And now this group of local high school students will visit BYU for the first time during Education Week to perform with guest artist and Broadway performer Rodrick Covington.

The American Heritage Lyceum Philharmonic is an orchestra comprised of Utah high school musicians ages 13-18, and was named "Best Youth Performing Ensemble" by Best of State of Utah for the past seven years.

"It's the first time we've been asked (to perform at Education Week), and we hope we will be able to come again," Director and BYU alumnus Kayson Brown said. "We're very excited to be able to do this."

The ensemble is known as one of the nation's premier youth orchestras, regularly recording and performing with nationally recognized guest artists. All student musicians in the Philharmonic learn to play professional music industry repertoire from genres including classical, patriotic, sacred, jazz and pop.

"Come ready to be a part of the show," said Covington, guest artist and Broadway performer. "There can be no show or performance without the audience; they are actually a character of the show." And with the variety of music the group plays, there is something for everyone.

During Education Week the philharmonic plans to perform "Beethoven's 5 Secrets," the first movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, original hymn arrangements from the group's album "The Master" and works from the patriotic "One Nation."

Lyceum Festival

Aside from the student orchestra, the Lyceum Festival is an annual youth camp held to expand the orchestra experience to students beyond the geographic boundary that serves the Utah and Salt Lake Valleys during the school year. The 2015 festival took place at Zermatt Resort in Midway from July 27-Aug. 1 and accommodated nearly 100 students



from around the country and one student from Vienna, Austria. In the past, students have come from South America, Canada and all over the world.



Numerous music camps such as this are already available for local students, but this camp specializes in giving rural students the “opportunity to drink deeply and intensely for one week,” according to Brown. The students are given original professional-level sheet music about six weeks before the camp to be performed at the end of the festival. Students come prepared and ready to play and learn the music on a deeper level.

Daily activities ranging from music ensemble rehearsals, sectional practices with common instruments and guest artist mentoring keep the students learning. At the end of the week they watch a concert performed by the Utah Symphony as well as perform in their own concert showcasing what they’ve practiced and learned.

Hans Fronberg, a junior at Davis High School, joined the group for a second summer at the Lyceum Festival. “I think their teaching style is great,” he said. “It’s nice to be with kids who also have such a great passion for music.” Fronberg said he hopes to continue with the group in the fall and accommodate the rigorous schedule.

Lyceum Philharmonic group

High school students such as Fronberg audition to play in the Lyceum group that practices and plays throughout the school year. They come from 25 different high schools covering a geographic area larger than the state of Rhode Island, according to Brown. Members are required to be in their high school ensemble, take private lessons, be proficient in technique and have music reading skills common to their instrument.

Once in the group, many students said they practice anywhere from one to four hours a day, sometimes on multiple instruments. “(The group) allows us to be immersed in incredible music that is being forgotten in our culture,” said Christian Stone, trombone student at Lone Peak High School and member of the philharmonic, via email. “It can be challenging at times, with six-hour long rehearsals, but come concert time, it’s always worth it.”

Lyceum Philharmonic makes spiritual music a big priority, something that makes it unique from many other groups. Natalie Miner, a violinist from the American Heritage School, related an experience right before the final end-of-year concert at the Thanksgiving Point outdoor amphitheater.

"We were rehearsing Sibelius Symphony No. 2 and found it very difficult to focus," Miner said, noting that it was pouring rain. "The wind was blowing music everywhere, it was cold and we were starting to get frustrated."

Gathered in the green room as the concert opened, "The orchestra knelt in prayer together and asked for help," Miner said. "The next time we played, it was the best we had ever done. The music was very powerful. I learned to love music more than I thought was possible that night."

Brown teaches the link between music and spirituality to all students that participate in the orchestra.

"BYU Education Week is an especially important concert series for us because of the people that come," Brown said. To perform at Education week, he said the Lyceum group turned down an offer from the PianoGuys' PBS special at the Red Rocks Amphitheater. The philharmonic not only fills a professional niche, but they play spiritual music and they are excited to be able to share that with the vast audience coming to Education Week.

Guest artist Covington performed in Broadway's "The Lion King" and, having visited BYU before, said he is delighted to be back and have the opportunity to perform with the Lyceum Philharmonic. Brown said Covington will "bring the house down at this concert."

One of the pieces they will play together is from an original work, "One Nation," composed by Rob Moffat and orchestrator Rob Gardner in remembrance of the Civil War. Moffat said wrote this piece with Covington in mind. "When I heard the music, I loved it," Covington said. He mentioned what an honor it was to have a piece written for him.

"It's thrilling to work with students who are discovering music at almost every rehearsal," Brown said. He said he hopes the audience will be uplifted and entertained and the students inspired by the experience to continue to practice and express their own testimonies through their instruments.

"Come with an open heart, mind and spirit," Covington said. "Then you're open to see what's being shared."

The orchestra is scheduled to perform Aug. 19 to 21 at 7 p.m. in the Harris Fine Arts Center Pardoe Theatre. Tickets are \$12 and can be purchased in person at the Harris Fine Arts Center or online at www.byutickets.com.