



samohi:orchestras
2026 SYMPHONY TOUR

SANTA MONICA HIGH SCHOOL
Santa Monica, California

ABOUT



SANTA MONICA HIGH SCHOOL, fondly referred to as “Samohi,” was founded in 1891 and currently serves a diverse student body of approximately 2,600. Located on a 33-acre campus just a short walk from the Pacific Ocean, the school has a longstanding tradition of musical excellence. Samohi music offerings include a marching band, four jazz bands, five choral groups, seven orchestras, and classes in composition, mariachi, and piano. Music courses range from entry-level to advanced, with around 800 students participating each year. The strength of the program is supported by several key factors: strong elementary and middle school feeder programs, a community that values the arts, dedicated parents, a passionate fine arts coordinator, and enthusiastic administrative support.



BARNUM HALL is home to Santa Monica High School’s Performing Arts and a cultural magnet for the community. Originally built in 1937 and beautifully restored in its original Art Deco style, this historic venue serves as a vibrant hub for creativity and community. It not only supports the artistic endeavors of Santa Monica High School but also stands as a cherished landmark for cultural events and performances throughout the year.



THE SAMOHI SYMPHONY

The Santa Monica High School Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1903, has earned a reputation as one of the premier public high school orchestras in the United States over the course of its long history.

The Santa Monica High School Symphony Orchestra was chosen in 1999 to perform at the 53rd Annual Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago. In 2005, the Samohi Symphony received the Grand Champion Award at the American String Teachers Association competition in Reno, Nevada.

The Samohi Symphony Orchestra has traveled extensively. In 1996, the Symphony took part in the International Youth Music Festival in Valencia, Spain. In 2004, 2008 and 2014, the orchestra traveled to Prague, Brno, Salzburg, and Vienna. By invitation from the city of Hangzhou, China, the Symphony also participated in an East Asian tour in 2006. In 2018, the orchestra traveled to Argentina and Uruguay, performing in Buenos Aires, Rosario, and Montevideo. In its travels, the Samohi Symphony has performed in several of the most revered concert halls in the world, including multiple concerts at the Rudolfinum in Prague and at Carnegie Hall in New York. 2024 marked the Symphony's first return to Europe since 2014 with performances at the historic Gewandhaus in Leipzig and at the Berlin Philharmonie.

In 2006, as part of the Los Angeles Philharmonic's "Sounds About Town" series, the Samohi Symphony Orchestra became the first public high school to perform at Walt Disney Concert Hall. In the following years, the orchestra returned twice to Walt Disney Concert Hall, through a partnership with the Los Angeles Music Center. When a scheduled European tour was cancelled due to the 2016 bombings in Brussels, the Samohi Symphony Orchestra held a benefit concert for the International Red Cross, using its fourth performance at the Walt Disney Concert Hall to raise funds for victims of terrorism and violence. In March 2025, the Samohi Symphony Orchestra was one of six youth ensembles invited by the Los Angeles Philharmonic to perform in "Mahlerthon", a day celebrating the music of Gustav Mahler, as part of its Mahler Grooves festival.

The orchestra owes much of its success to the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District and Santa Monica High School leadership for their continued support of music education, the city of Santa Monica and the Santa Monica Orchestra Parents Association for its financial support and the volunteer work of so many dedicated parents.



JASON AIELLO

Director of Orchestras

Jason Aiello began teaching orchestra at Santa Monica High School in 2006 after graduating with honors from UCLA as the recipient of the Joyce Fahlman Fellowship. While at UCLA, he studied music education with Dr. Frank Heuser and cello with Antonio Lysy. In addition to his work at Santa Monica High School, Mr. Aiello teaches cello sectionals and conducts the Sinfonia Orchestra for Elemental Strings, a youth orchestra program for elementary school students in Santa Monica. In past summers, Mr. Aiello has served as the Senior Camp Orchestra Director at the La Honda Music Camp in Northern California.

As a guest conductor, Mr. Aiello has worked with honor orchestras across California sponsored by the California Music Educators Association and the Southern California School Band and Orchestra Association. Currently, he serves on the board of the California Orchestra Directors Association, where his primary responsibilities have included creating and maintaining the CODA website and auditioning junior high and high school cellists for various CODA-sponsored honor orchestras.

EMILY TAYLOR

Director of Orchestras

Emily Taylor, a proud alumna of Santa Monica High School, graduated from UCLA with a degree in Music Education, where she studied violin with Margaret Lysy and pedagogy with Dr. Johanna Gamboa-Kroesen.

She has taught strings and general music across elementary to high school levels throughout LAUSD, Manhattan Beach Unified, and Santa Monica, including work with Elemental Music, SOL-LA Music Academy, and Saint Anne School. Her experience includes leading ensembles, coaching sectionals, teaching private lessons, and developing inclusive, student-centered curriculum. As a Gluck Fellow at UCLA, she also brought chamber music outreach performances to diverse communities across Los Angeles.

Ms. Taylor has presented at the California All-State Music Education Conference and contributed research on belonging and cultural identity in school music programs. She is passionate about fostering technical excellence, expressive musicianship, and a lifelong love of music in her students.



2025 WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL - LOS ANGELES



2024 GEWANDHAUS - LEIPZIG & PHILHARMONIE - BERLIN



2022 CARNEGIE HALL - NEW YORK CITY



2018 TEATRO SOLIS - URUGUAY



PERFORMANCES

REPERTOIRE

2024-2025

The Orchestral Suite from Disney's Aladdin by Alan Menken
orch. by Danny Troob

Disney's Hercules Orchestral Suite by Alan Menken arr. Bruce Healey,
orch. by Greg Prechel

Orchestral Suite from Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas
by Danny Elfman

Symphony No. 4 in G major by Gustav Mahler
I. Bedächtig. Nicht eilen

Symphony No. 5 in Eb Major Op. 68 by Jean Sibelius
III. Allegro moderato - Misterioso - Un pochettino largamente

Cinema Paradiso by Ennio Morricone

Libertango by Astor Piazzolla

Totenfeier by Gustav Mahler

Conga del Fuego Nuevo by Arturo Márquez

Can you Hear the Music from "Oppenheimer" by Ludwig Göransson,
arr. by Alex Johansson

Gladiator Suite from Orchestra by Hans Zimmer, arr. by D. De la Rosa

Black Panther Medley by Ludwig Göransson, arr. by Georg Fermata

Love Theme from "Spartacus" by Alex North

Adventures on Earth from "E.T." by John Williams

Overture to Khovantchina by Modest Mussorgsky

Symphony No. 3, Op. 78 by Camille Saint-Saëns
II. Maestoso - Allegro

2023-2024

The Orchestral Suite from Disney's Aladdin by Alan Menken,
orch by Danny Troob

Symphonic Variation "Merry-Go-Round + Cave of Mind" From Howl's
Moving Castle by Joe Hisaishi

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone Suite for Orchestra by John Williams
I. Hedwig's Theme
III. Nimbus 2000
IV. Harry's Wondrous World

Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73 by Johannes Brahms
I. Allegro non troppo
II. Adagio non troppo
III. Allegretto grazioso
IV. Allegro con spirito

Ethiopia's Shadow in America by Florence Price

Hoedown from "Rodeo" by Aaron Copland

Bohemian Rhapsody by Freddie Mercury arr. and orch by Niall Taro Ferguson

Hebrides Overture, Op. 26 by Felix Mendelssohn

Symphony Suite from "The Fellowship of the Ring" by Howard Shore

Princess Mononoke by Joe Hisaishi arr. by Niall Ferguson

Rogue One: A Star Wars Story by Michael Giacchino
I. Jyn Erso & Hope Suite
II. The Imperial Suite

Avatar Suite by James Horner

Hungarian March from The Damnation of Faust by Hector Berlioz

2021-2022

My Neighbor Totoro by Joe Hisaishi

Orchestral Suite from Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas by
Danny Elfman, orchestrated by Mark McKenzie

The Orchestral Suite from Disney's Aladdin by Alan Menken, orchestrated
by Danny Troob

Symphony No. 9 in E minor "From the New World", Op. 95 by Antonin Dvorak
I. Adagio, Allegro Molto
II. Largo
IV. Allegro con fuoco

"Mambo" from West Side Story by Lenord Bernstein

Voices Shouting Out by Nkeiru Okoye

Festive Overture, Op. 96 by Dimitri Shostakovich

Superman March from Superman by John Williams

Suite from Cinema Paradiso by Ennio Morricone and Andrea Morricone,
arr. by Johathan Hughes

The Flight to Neverland from "Hook" by John Williams

Spider-Man: Far From Home by Michael Giacchino

The Firebird Suite (1919 version) by Igor Stravinsky
IV. Berceuse
V. Finale

Symphony No. 1, "Afro-American" by William Grant Still
IV. Aspirations. Lento con risoluzione

Melody by Myroslav Skoryk

2022-2023

The Lion King Orchestral Suite, Music by Elton John, Words by Tim Rice,
Score by Hans Zimmer, orch by Brad Kelley

Fantasmic! by Bruce Healy

The Planets, Op. 32 by Gustav Holst
II. Venus, the Bringer of Peace
IV. Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity

Tico-Tico No Fubá by Zequinha Abreu, arr. By Cliff Colnot

Symphony No. 1, "Afro-American" by William Grant Still
I. Longing . Moderato to Assai

"O Mio Babbino Caro" from Gianni Schicchi by Giacomo Puccini

Tragic Overture, Op. 81 by Johannes Brahms

Danzón No. 2 by Arturo Márquez

The Simpsons Main Title by Danny Elfman

Batman Suite by Danny Elfman, orchestrated by Steve Bartek, adapted by
Christopher Bankey

Pokemon Medley by Junichi Masuda, arr. by Andres Soto, Adam Gilberti &
Jose Daniel Ruiz

Star Wars: The Force Awakens Suite for Orchestra by John Williams
I. March of the Resistance
II. Rey's Theme
V. The Jedi Steps and Finale

Polonaise from Eugene Onegin, Op. 24 by Pytor Tchaikovsky

La mere l'oye (Mother Goose Suite) by Maurice Ravel
V. Le jardin féérique

2019-2020

The Lion King Medley by Elton John and Hans Zimmer arr. Brad Kelley
Orchestral Suite from Aladdin by Alan Menken arr. by Danny Troob
Fantasmic! by Bruce Healey
Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, op. 67 by Ludwig van Beethoven
I. Allegro con brio
II. Andante con moto
III. Scherzo: Allegro
IV. Allegro
Overture to Candide by Leonard Bernstein
Bugler's Holiday by Leroy Anderson
(Orchestra season shut down due to Covid)

2018-2019

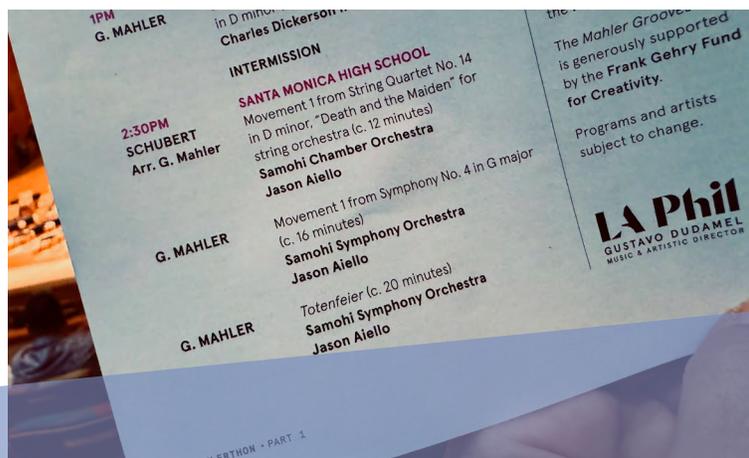
Theme from the Simpsons by Danny Elfman, arr. by Christopher Bankey
My Neighbor Totoro by Joe Hisaishi
Hercules Orchestral Suite by Alan Menken, orchestrated by Greg Prechel
The Orchestra Suite from Aladdin by Alan Menken, orch. Danny Troob
Firebird Suite by Igor Stravinsky
VI. Berceuse
VII. Finale
Symphony No. 2 in E Minor, Op. 17 by Sergei Rachmaninoff
III. Adagio
Symphonie Fantastique, Op. 14 by Hector Berlioz
IV. Marche au Supplice
Danzón No. 2 by Arturo Márquez
Night on Bald Mountain by Modest Mussorgsky, orch. Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov
Suite from Jaws by John Williams
I. The Shark Theme
II. Out to Sea and Shark Cage Fugue
Theme from Jurassic Park by John Williams
Mamma Mia! Medley by Stig Anderson, Benny Andersson, Björn Ulvaeus,
Arr. Gary Fry
La mere l'oye (Mother Goose Suite) by Maurice Ravel
V. Le Jardin Féérique
Variations on an Original Theme (Enigma) by Edward Elgar
XIV. E. D. U.

2017-2018

The Flight to Neverland From "Hook" by John Williams
Symphonic Variation "Merry-Go-Round + Cave of Mind" From Howl's
Moving Castle by Joe Hisaishi
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone Suite for Orchestra by John Williams
I. Hedwig's Theme
IV. Harry's Wondrous World
Symphony No 1. in C minor Op. 68 by Johannes Brahms
I. Un poco sostenuto - Allegro
II. Andante sostenuto
III. Un poco Allegretto e grazioso
IV. Adagio, Più andante, allegro non troppo, ma con brio
Overture to West Side Story by Leonard Bernstein
Tangazo by Astor Piazzolla
William Tell Overture by Gioacchino Rossini
Don't Cry For Me Argentina by Andrew Lloyd Webber
Star Wars Suite for Orchestra by John Williams
I. Main Title
II. Princess Leia's Theme
III. The Imperial March (Darth Vader's theme)
V. Throne Room and End Title
Festive Overture, Op. 96 by Dimitri Shostakovich
Cinema Paradiso by Ennio Morricone

2016-2017

Lieutenant Kije Suite Symphonique, Op. 60 by Sergei Prokofiev
I. The Birth of Kije
II. Romance
III. Kije's Wedding
IV. Troika
V. Kije Funeral
Tico Tico no Fubá by Zequinha de Abreu
Por una Cabeza by Carlos Gardel arr. John Williams
Symphony No. 9 by Antonin Dvorak
IV. Finale
Symphony No. 5 in D minor, Op. 47 by Dmitri Shostakovich
IV. Allegro non troppo
Avatar by James Horner
Back to the Future by Alan Silvestri
Les Miserables Symphonic Suite by Claud-Michel Schönberg,
arr. by John Cameron
Firebird Suite by Igor Stravinsky
VI. Berceuse
VII. Finale



RECOGNITION



“

I am incredibly grateful for my time in the Samohi Symphony. These precious years gave me a valuable sense of accomplishment and a deep understanding of the joy of making music with others. My path to becoming a professional musician was kickstarted by this wonderful group of teachers and administrators, and I am proud to be a Samohi alum!”

Ryan Roberts (Samohi Class of 2014)
English Horn / Oboe - New York Philharmonic
Principal Oboe - Festival Orchestra of Lincoln Center

“

No other program compares with regard to welding the experience of art in a hands-on, active, participatory way within the general education curriculum. I have extolled the Santa Monica model to people everywhere. The world is talking a lot about El Sistema now, but Santa Monica schools have been doing something similar for 50 years.”

David Robertson (Samohi alumnus)

Former Music Director of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and Sydney Symphony Orchestra

Director of Conducting Studies at the Juilliard School

“

As an aspiring professional musician, playing with the Samohi Symphony Orchestra gave me a glimpse of the world I hope to enter - and I loved it . . . Only later did I realize what an incredible gift the Samohi orchestra is, not only to its students, but for our entire community.”

Maki Kubota (Samohi Class of 2009)
Cellist, Houston Symphony



“

The Santa Monica High School Orchestra Program is one of the finest school music programs I have ever witnessed... Directors Joni Swenson and Jason Aiello demand tremendous dedication and sacrifice from all of the student musicians and they achieve phenomenal results... Although not all young players from this program will choose a career in music, it is wonderful to see that [the] players will have [received] the kind of background and advanced training that makes it possible to enter the best conservatories and college music programs anywhere. I am proud to be a member of a community that can produce such rich musical background for so many students. The Samohi orchestral program can truly be held up as a model for all others.”

Guido Lamell, Violinist
Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra

Los Angeles Times

How Gustavo Dudamel's Mahler festival grooves for young and old



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“ Santa Monica High School’s Chamber Orchestra brought a lovely, lyric sheen to Mahler’s string orchestra arrangement of Schubert’s “Death and the Maiden” string quartet. The school’s Symphony Orchestra next turned to the first movement of Mahler’s Fourth. So suavely sophisticated was the performance led by Jason Aiello, I had to blink a few times to remind myself these were high school students.”

Mark Swed, LA Times

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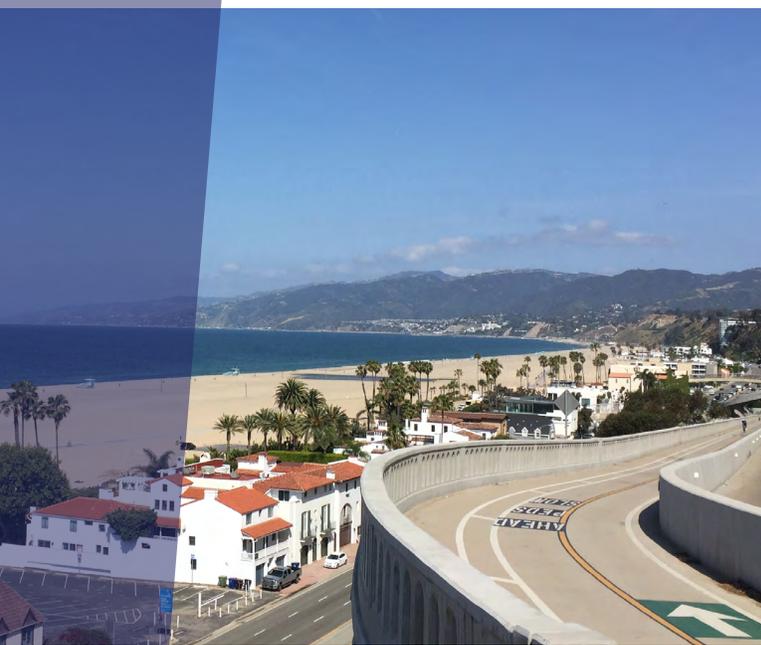
COMMUNITY NEWS

Santa Monica High School Symphony and Chamber Orchestras to Perform at LA Phil's Mahlerthon

By: S.M. Next | Date: February 12, 2025

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OUR CITY



SANTA MONICA, a popular seaside resort, is located in Southern California between West Los Angeles and the Pacific Ocean. On August 3, 1769, Spanish explorer Gaspar de Portola camped in what is now downtown Santa Monica — and the area was named after Saint Monica. The City was founded over a hundred years later in 1875, and the first school was created in 1876. In 1893, when the railroad came to Santa Monica, the longest wharf in the world was built to accommodate large ships. The new port was referred to as Port Los Angeles.

Santa Monica's beginning as a resort town might be partly due to the creation of tremendously popular amusement piers in the early 1900s; at one time the city had five of them. Today only one remains, and although it is much changed from the original, it continues to be a popular place to spend a sunny afternoon.

Santa Monica has always been a desirable place to live — Will Rogers, Cary Grant and Greta Garbo were among those to have beach houses here. Today many well known movie, television and music personalities call the city their home.

Santa Monica currently has a population of over 90,000, and because of its growing number of hotels, restaurants and shopping areas, has become a must-visit destination for travelers from all over the world.