AD ASTRA Kansas City

2026-2027 Season Auditions

Our city. Our sound. Our heart.

Horn

Audition Information

Audition Requirements & Procedures

Complete the audition process in just 3 easy steps...

1 Register to audition at www.adastrakc.org

2 Prepare and record your audition materials/excerpts.

3 Submit your video audition by May 11th

Audition Requirements & Procedures

Thank you for your interest in joining Ad Astra Youth Orchestra Kansas City!

This packet contains everything you need to know about our audition process, procedures, and acceptance/membership requirements.

One of our central tenets is making sure that audition information and procedures are simple and as fair as possible. You can contact us by email or by phone. Email is usually the best method to get a quick answer.

Email: **auditions@adastrakc.net**
Phone: 913-586-4300

Here are the quick and easy steps to audition:

1. Register to audition by May 1, 2026 at **www.adastrakc.org**
2. All new and returning students are required to audition each year for Ad Astra acceptance and orchestra placement.
3. For the 2026-2027 season there is no audition registration fee for students playing woodwind, brass, or percussion instruments. However, you must register to be able to audition.
4. Once we receive your completed audition registration, you will be sent an email with important information and instructions for submitting your video auditions.
5. All acceptance and placement auditions are administered via video-recorded submissions. Students are allowed to record as many "takes" of each required excerpt before submitting.
6. Audition videos are due by May 11, 2026. Videos must be submitted using the link or platform provided in your registration confirmation email. Video submissions are accepted only through the online link/portal. Please do not email video links.

Recording your audition videos:

1. Using a cell phone, computer, video camera, etc., video record yourself performing each excerpt/requirement separately. Please make sure your entire instrument, as well as both hands and the bow, are visible in your video. Do not play behind a stand.
2. Students are allowed to record their excerpts as many times as they like. Students should submit the video recordings that they are most proud of.
   All excerpts/requirements must be recorded and submitted as separate tracks.
3. All videos must be uploaded to YouTube and saved as "unlisted." No other formats are accepted. To save your videos to YouTube as unlisted, please refer to this online tutorial: **CLICK HERE.**

How are my auditions evaluated?

The Ad Astra staff comprises dedicated and experienced music educators. All requirements/excerpts have been highly vetted and selected to ensure fairness and musical quality, and to ensure that all is accessible to all students at their current age/playing level.

All performances are evaluated using the attached performance rubric.

Ad Astra auditions are evaluated by staff and other area music educators as well as professional musicians.

Audition videos are not evaluated through the lens of perfection. While we expect all students to submit high-quality auditions, perfection is not required. Performances are evaluated through the rubric, but more importantly, in terms of preparedness, current playing level/ability, and musical promise.

Audition results, outcomes, placements, scoring, and/or adjudicator comments are not discussed with students, parents, school orchestra directors, and/or private teachers. Acceptance and placements are final.

School Orchestra Director/Private Teacher Recommendations

One of Ad Astra's major tenets is building strong ties and bridges of communication with our area school orchestra directors and private studio teachers. Ad Astra staff firmly believe that all work in tandem to ensure student success.

Part of the audition process includes recommendations from school music educators and private teachers. Teachers listed on your initial registration will receive a confidential recommendation form to submit on your behalf. Information gathered helps us determine placement, thereby solidifying a positive experience for each student in our program.

When do I find out the results?

Audition videos must be received by May 11, 2026.

Auditioning students will receive acceptance and placement information via email and USPS by May 27, 2026. At that time, accepted students/families will receive the season registration procedures, the full season calendar, tuition information, and the financial assistance application.

To be considered for...

Apollo Symphony Orchestra

Apollo Orchestra is Ad Astra's most advanced ensemble. Apollo is designed for advanced students in grades 9-12.

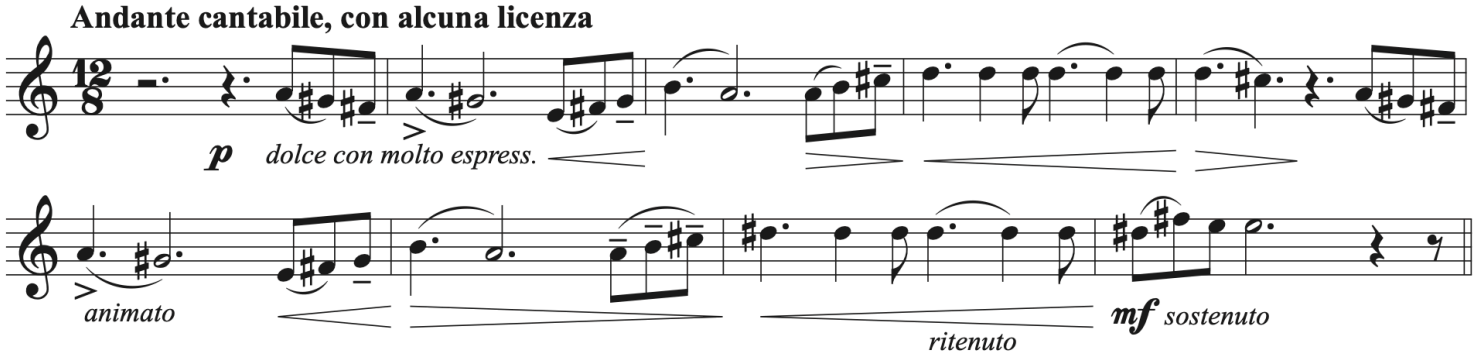
Apollo Orchestra will be strings-only for the first semester.

Second semester we add woodwinds, brass and percussion to form the Ad Astra Apollo Symphony Orchestra.

Please prepare and video record the two required excerpts.

Horn Excerpt #1

Symphony No. 5 (2nd Movement)
Piotr Tchaikovsky



Horn Excerpt #2

Montagues and Capulets from *Romeo and Juliet*
Sergei Prokofiev/arr. Sienicki

All About Ad Astra:

In just two years, Ad Astra Youth Orchestra Kansas City has grown from 90 students in two orchestras to over 200 in four ensembles, including a 30-member cello ensemble.

In this short time, Ad Astra has already gained a reputation for musical excellence and educational integrity. The program has also established itself as Kansas City's Youth Orchestra and Musical Ambassadors, performing for highly visible community performances such as the KC Chamber of Commerce World Cup Dinner, the Kansas Music Educators Association, and others. Ad Astra has collaborated with KC area professional musicians, Grammy award-winning artists, and the Kansas City Jazz Orchestra. In June 2026, Ad Astra Youth Orchestra will make its debut performance in New York's famed Carnegie Hall.

Ad Astra's major tenets include providing area student musicians the opportunity to expand their playing opportunities beyond their school program. Our aim is to help students and teachers enhance their programs by offering students these additional opportunities. All music is selected by Ad Astra staff through a highly vetted process to ensure age/level appropriateness, educational value, and overall enjoyment.

Ad Astra Orchestras

Ad Astra is made up of three orchestras, all based on grade/age and playing level/ability. Each student submits audition materials, and all are heavily vetted to ensure effective and fair placement.

Apollo Orchestra is Ad Astra's most advanced orchestra.
Apollo is designed for students in grades 9-college.
In 2026/2027 Apollo will introduce a full/symphonic orchestra experience for our members. First semester will be string orchestra only and second semester will be full/symphonic orchestra. String students must be members in both semesters.
Apollo is conducted by Russ Pieken.

Gemini Orchestra is our ensemble designed primarily for students in grades 7-9 with at least two years of playing experience.
Gemini is conducted by Sheri Cain and Lauren Martens.

Aurora Orchestra is designed for students in grades 5-9 with at least one year of playing experience.
Aurora is conducted by Madeline Smith.

Cellonauts is Ad Astra's cello ensemble. Accepted cellists in Apollo and Gemini Orchestras are eligible to audition for this select group. Accepted members will receive Cellonaut audition information before the start of the season.

Cellonauts is conducted by Matthew Imber.

Ad Astra Requirements

Motivated string students from across the Kansas City area are encouraged to audition. Ad Astra accepts auditions from students in grades 6 through college.

Ad Astra aims to enhance a student's music education by providing motivated students the opportunity to perform in an ensemble outside of their school day. Ad Astra is not intended as a replacement for the school music program.

Students must be enrolled and in good standing in their respective school orchestra/strings or band program, should one be offered. String students must be enrolled in orchestra, and woodwind/brass/percussion students must be enrolled in band.

Of course, this requirement is waived if a student is homeschooled or attends a school that does not offer a strings/orchestra or band program. This requirement is also waived for college-level students.

Accepted members must adhere to the Ad Astra attendance policy. Members are also required to be prepared for each and every rehearsal.

Tuition

Ad Astra strives to keep tuition as low as possible and as attainable as possible for all members and families. However, we also strive to offer a superior product and experience for our student members.

Tuition rates for the 2026-2027 season are as follows:
-String students
(full-year tuition)
$750.00
-Woodwind/Brass/Percussion students
(half-year tuition)
$300.00

Tuition rates equate to approximately just $25 per weekly rehearsal. Accepted students and families are offered fair payment plans and options. Families may also apply for financial assistance to help offset tuition costs. Accepted students will also receive instructions for the financial assistance application.

Rehearsals and Performances

Rehearsals take place at Church of the Resurrection at 135th and Roe Boulevard in Leawood, KS.

Rehearsals begin during the first week of September and last until late April/early May. We do take breaks during the month of December and for Spring Break.

Rehearsals in 2026-2027 will be held on Tuesday evenings.

Aurora Orchestra	*6:30 – 8:00 pm*
Gemini Orchestra	*6:30 – 8:00 pm*
Apollo Orchestra	*6:00 – 8:00 pm*
Cellonauts	*8:05 – 8:45 pm*

**Tentative start/end times*

Ad Astra normally presents 2-3 formal concerts per season.
Community performances are also scheduled each year.
Performances take place in venues such as Yardley Hall, Helzberg Hall, area high schools, and other community locations.
Accepted members will receive a full rehearsal/performance calendar in May.