

# Lyceum Music Festival Raises Bar on Music Camp in Park City, Utah

Posted by [Betsy Hijazi](#) • October 12, 2010 • [Printer-friendly](#)



This summer, the **Lyceum Music Festival** (Lyceum) held its third annual youth orchestral music camp in Park City, Utah. Designed for musicians ages 13-21, the week-long program offers students the opportunity to work with classical guest artists, [Utah Symphony](#) musicians, and fellow orchestral peers from schools around the nation.

This year, Lyceum welcomed acclaimed violinist [Jenny Oaks Baker](#) whose recently-released *Then Sings My Soul* has remained on the Billboard Classical Charts for more than seven months. And returning to Lyceum for the third year was guest artist **Utah Symphony** [Associate Conductor David Cho](#). In addition to Jenny Oaks Baker and David Cho, Boston's [Muir String Quartet](#) participated in the festival as chamber coaches.

The strength of the performing arts scene in Salt Lake City is one of the reasons I chose to make this area my home. I immerse myself in as many music activities as I can, and each day of the week offers an opportunity to attend a concert somewhere in the valley. *Accessibility is key.*

For 15 years I lived in Boston, home of the [Boston Symphony](#), [Boston Pops](#), music conservatories and various community orchestras, and the number of music events I attended over the years amounts to less than two dozen. Music is abundant, but unless you live in the heart of Boston where all the music action thrives, it is cost and time prohibitive to attend but an event here or there. Not so in Salt Lake City.

For a city of its small size, Salt Lake City's musical offerings are huge. And because of its size, I can attend any number of events within a generous four-mile radius. From the **University of Utah** to **Abravanel Hall**, there are a number of music-related events on any given night. Within 10 minutes, I can drive from my home to the symphony, the ballet, or various recitals at schools or churches, and for the most part, can even park for free. *That is accessibility.*

In a city with a population less than 200,000, I have to wonder how it is that there are so many musicians and why the performing arts community is so strong. I believe the answer lies in that Utah highly values music education, and a



valued musical community fosters and instills a love and appreciation for music with our youth.

[Kayson Brown](#), founder and director of the **Lyceum Music Festival**, grew up in a world of music. A cellist in the public school system, he went to every music camp he could, but never had access to working musicians. It wasn't until he was in college that he met professional musicians who were actually making their living by playing music. Meeting and studying with [Utah Symphony cellist John Eckstein](#), Kayson began to understand and experience the opportunities within the professional music scene, and his eyes were opened to performance as a career option.

With a Bachelor of Music Degree in Cello Performance, a Masters Degree in Orchestral Conducting, and the experience of working as a professional cellist throughout Utah, Kayson wanted to make a difference in the lives of the youth he worked with and founded the Lyceum Music Festival. His primary goal for the camp was to pair students with working professional musicians, giving the students a direct look into their possible career opportunities as a musician. "The Lyceum Music Festival is designed to give students a sneak-peek into the professional music world. Here they get to meet the people who swim in that ocean and get a feel for what it takes to get there."

Lyceum has brought accomplished conductors and musicians to talk to and work with students side by side as they spend the week learning, collaborating, rehearsing, and immersing themselves in challenging repertoire that culminates in a public performance at the end of the festival. Over the past three years, students have had the opportunity to work with and learn from conductors [Keith Lockhart](#), [David Cho](#) and [David Lockington](#), violinist [Jenny Oaks Baker](#), [The 5 Browns](#), and a number of **Utah Symphony** musicians, including [violinist Yuki MacQueen](#), [cellist Kevin Shumway](#), [violinist Carl Johansen](#), [Trombonist Larry Zalkind](#), [violinist Judd Sheranian](#), [bassist Corbin Johnston](#) and [cellist John Eckstein](#).

Yuki MacQueen said, "For students, this well-guided week with coachings, sectionals and full orchestral rehearsals is beyond valuable. It's wise to have Utah Symphony musicians giving the orchestral coachings since they are actively performing throughout the year and can give useful insight and practical tips that a conductor or instrumentalist not affiliated with an orchestra may not have."

While some symphony musicians considered this year's repertoire to be difficult and ambitious, three-year tuba student Nick Larsen found it "amazing that we were able to pull off the professional music in one week!" But the week-long program isn't just about diving head first into the complexities of Gershwin's *An American in Paris*, Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man* or Bernstein's *Candide Overture*, it's also about students spending a week with their peers team building, laughing, making new friends, and having fun!

Cellist Kevin Shumway said, "When I encounter the festival participants walking in the hallways, and rehearsing in corners of the building, there is such a wonderful spirit of fun and learning, not to mention the lovely music making. Everyone seems very dedicated to advancing



their abilities in this wonderful art form. Students learn new repertoire and increase their technical ability and ensemble skills, but beyond that are the benefits of having fun with the faculty and students. Simple enjoyment of music, in a group setting, is the whole reason for doing it.”

The level of each student’s experience varies, with younger students generally having much less experience than those 5 years older than them. Each student auditions for Lyceum, and as observed by Utah Symphony musicians, the caliber of the students in the program grows year over year. Violinist Yuki MacQueen noted that “the students seemed more consistently at a higher level than two summers ago,” and Jenny Oaks Baker said she was “impressed by the level of the young musicians who sounded wonderful and were fabulous to work with.”

With Jenny Oaks Baker as the festival’s special guest artist, the Lyceum students performed works from her various recordings. Under the batons of David Cho and Kayson Brown, Jenny and the students performed *Amazing Grace*, *Gabriel’s Oboe* and *Far and Away Suite*, all arrangements by Utah Composer [Kurt Bestor](#), *Shaker Fantasia* (arr. Sam Cardon) and *Come, Come Ye Saints* (arr. Merrill Jensen). Having performed as first violinist with the [National Symphony Orchestra](#) for seven years, Jenny understands the demands required of an orchestra musician. She said, “I was excited about the high school musicians putting together such a difficult program in just a week. This is what musicians do in professional orchestras, so it was wonderful training for them. I was really impressed that the students had the opportunity to work with such great chamber music coaches and amazing conductors.”



Jenny, whose spirituality is closely connected to her music continued, “I was really pleased that I was able to perform religious music in my concert with the Lyceum Festival and that I was able to talk about spiritual things with the students during my Q & A. I was also happy to have the time with the students so that I could share my own experiences. They had great questions and, hopefully, I gave them some insight that will help them in their own lives.”

Invited by Kayson Brown to be a part of this year's Park City festival, Jenny said, “I was happy to be a part of it because I grew up in Utah and had to go away every summer to music camps (Idylwild, Interlochen, Aspen) to have a great musical experience. I am thrilled that now there is a wonderful music camp here in Utah for aspiring young musicians, and I will definitely recommend the Lyceum Festival to my colleagues and to other young artists. It was a real thrill to be able to work with both Kayson and David as they are both great directors and friends.”

**Conductor David Cho** has participated in the Lyceum Music Festival for three years, and since its inception, has seen the number of student participants grow as well as their level of talent. He calls Kayson Brown a “visionary” whose passion for Lyceum’s success has the potential to bring it to a level “as



big and as great as Aspen.” David said that Lyceum students have the unique opportunity to work with **Utah Symphony** musicians, and that each person, teacher and student, gains or comes away with a renewed perspective. “Working together, we find that we refresh our memory about why we started taking music lessons, and it’s vital to be able to go to the core of our love of instruments and music.”

Lyceum students aren’t the only people who learn during the week. David Cho said, “90 percent of the advice, criticism or encouragement that I offered from the podium applied to my own weaknesses. After making comments, I wondered, ‘hmmm, how come I don’t do that?’” Reflecting on his own journey as a young musician, David said that as he would occasionally get frustrated on the podium, he would realize how much worse he was when he was their age!

David finds great inspiration in the students, the coaches, and the guest artists, and not only does he recommend that students participate in future Lyceum Music Festivals, he has a comment for all Youth Orchestra Directors: “This isn’t a festival that is geared to steal students from other programs. It’s a summer opportunity to get together with friends from different youth orchestras in order to learn new orchestral repertoire. Think outside of the box and encourage your students to attend Lyceum!”

I’m not a musician, but I am a student. I’m constantly looking for sources of musical education for myself, and spending the week in Park City observing the activities, students and teachers, I wanted nothing greater than to pick up an instrument, look at a score, and play my part alongside everyone else. I was in a room with 100 people, and yet I was an outsider dying to get in! What an elite group to belong to, these musicians. They create and inspire simply with their fingers and their hearts.



I played flute for 4 years as a teen, but I doubt I could blow a proper note today, much less count out a measure! We certainly didn’t have music camps when I was growing up, and no one ever considered music performance beyond high school band. Playing an instrument was just something you did; you joined the band or orchestra, and never did the two come together!

Today I see a variety of career opportunities, and I see how our youth are educated musically for different reasons. Violist Carl Johansen said, “Lyceum provides a wonderful chance for kids to play really important symphonic works. Even for the majority of kids who do not go into music as a career, they will take away memories of playing in a symphony which will last throughout their lifetime. The ‘team spirit’ approach to a symphony performance can only help them to be a better team player in whatever career they ultimately pursue.”

The Lyceum Music Festival is not simply a summer band camp. Students are not going to hang out with friends, have fun, and maybe play a couple of theme songs like I did in band! They are sitting down with professional musicians who are showing them what is involved in having a career as a professional musician, and what it requires to get to that point. Each day is a master

class for the students, and it's an opportunity that very few people have. Imagine being able to sit down next to Donald Trump as he tells you what it's like to work in his business world, and what it will take for you to work your way to that position. The experience truly is invaluable, and it's incredibly rewarding – even for those of us who only observed!

Nick Larsen recommends Lyceum to other students. He said that “if they can get there, they will have the best musical time of their life.” And apparently, people really love the Lyceum t-shirts!

*For more information about the Lyceum Music Festival and photos from the week's events, visit [Lyceum on the Web](#) and on [Facebook](#).*