



EDUCATION PROGRAM UPDATE | June 16, 2020

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Free violin lessons continue virtually through Florida Orchestra, Prodigy® Cultural Arts partnership

Amid pandemic, TFO keeps up education programs, including more than 50 videos for Teaching Artist Program in Pinellas County schools [see below].

[WATCH VIDEO: Peek into the virtual world of Prodigy® violin lessons](#)

[BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH MUSIC: Click for The Florida Orchestra's annual community report](#)

ST. PETERSBURG, FL – The global coronavirus pandemic has not stopped The Florida Orchestra's free violin classes for kids through its partnership with the University Area CDC's Prodigy® Cultural Arts Program in Hillsborough County. TFO has taught students through virtual lessons online since mid-March and will continue to do so for the summer sessions starting in June.

In the past couple of months, TFO has taught about 20 children consistently through group and one-on-one video conference sessions, coordinated through three sites: Roy Haynes Community Center, Thonotosassa Recreation Center and Gardenville Recreation Center. The violins are delivered for free to the students, along with worksheets, books and other supplies. Parents have helped students with the technology, and to keep access equitable, printed worksheets have been delivered to each student, which will continue over the summer.

As the pandemic took hold, TFO Community Engagement Coordinator Michelle Painter and her instructors quickly saw how important the virtual Prodigy® lessons are to the students, who look forward to seeing each other every week.

"That's important because it speaks to the positive and safe environment these lessons provide, whether in person or virtually," Painter said. "It's a tough time right now, and any pocket of community or sense of belonging is so meaningful. I'm proud that our music program is able to provide a little piece of that every week."

The summer sessions include virtual group classes, buddy lessons, a "field trip" and a masterclass. Since students can't come to The Florida Orchestra for a field trip, TFO musicians will come to them via a video chat to give a behind-the-scenes tour of how an orchestra works. The two summer sessions are running June 8-July 31 and June 15-Aug. 7, with opportunities for new and returning students.

University Area CDC and Hillsborough County jointly provide funding for the program, which began small in the summer of 2018 to offer lessons and other musical experiences to children who might not have the opportunity any other way. The program has grown steadily with plans to include more sites as health and safety guidelines allow.

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The Florida Orchestra Education Program Update

Prodigy®, a research proven diversion and prevention program, uses an innovative approach to empower, educate and enable eligible youth, providing a doorway to a better world. Kids ages five to 18 experience performing and visual arts, taught as a tool for self-expression, to learn communication, exploration, problem solving and conflict resolution skills. For more information about the Prodigy® Cultural Arts Program, please visit uacdc.org/prodigy.

TFO teaching artists post more than 50 videos

In a separate program in Pinellas County, The Florida Orchestra Teaching Artists Kristin Baird and Kaitlin Springer have recorded more than 50 videos on violin and viola to support the schools' string teachers and students in a robust virtual learning section on the orchestra's [TFO at Home webpage](#). The videos help students learn scales, vibrato, fundamentals of shifting, warmup exercises, and other tips and tricks for playing a string instrument.

The advice comes straight from the pros: [Baird](#) and [Springer](#) are professional musicians who typically would split their time between playing on stage with the orchestra and helping in Pinellas classrooms during the school year. From mid-March through the end of May, they have supported teachers through phone calls and virtual sessions. They work in partnership with the Pinellas County School District, but the free videos are available for all music students [here](#); they have nearly 2,000 views so far. The pair also have taught 54 virtual private lessons to Pinellas strings students in the past two months.

In addition, TFO musicians are developing materials to help students prepare for 2020 All State auditions, hoping to close the gap for students who do not have access to private lessons. TFO cellist Lowell Adams is volunteering his time over the summer to create these resources for student cellists.

This is the third year of TFO's [Teaching Artist Program](#), which has helped build and guide strings programs in partnership with the Pinellas County School District since January 2017. It is funded in part by the Pinellas County Schools referendum. As a musical thank you to teachers, who have faced extreme challenges this year, the teaching artists recorded the *Flower Duet*, [which you can see here](#).

[About The Florida Orchestra](#)

The Florida Orchestra is recognized as Tampa Bay's leading performing arts institution for more than 52 years, the largest professional symphony orchestra in Florida, and one of the most vibrant and innovative orchestras in America. Under the leadership of Music Director Michael Francis, it performs more than 130 concerts a season, with series of classical, popular, and morning coffee concerts in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Clearwater, as well as free Pops in the Park concerts. Dedicated to bringing music to all people, connecting to the community is a priority, with pre-concert talks, family and youth concerts and other educational activities. Tickets and information: FloridaOrchestra.org.