

Virginia Symphony Orchestra and Norfolk Public Schools Celebrate Student Artistry in Inaugural Mary G. Brooke Recital

The Mary G. Brooke Legacy Program consummates its first year with a recital for all.

HAMPTON ROADS, VA [May 1, 2026] In January, the Virginia Symphony Orchestra and Norfolk Public Schools announced their collaboration on the Mary Goode Brooke Music for Young People Legacy Program. The program, created by Brooke's nephew Peyton Robertson, aims to support and celebrate the musical achievements of young musicians in Hampton Roads.

Throughout the course of the spring semester, students from Booker T. Washington High School, Granby High School, Lake Taylor High School, Maury High School and Norview High School, have rehearsed chamber music with VSO musicians as their mentor. Often called "the music of friends", students have been developing new musical skills and connecting with their fellow student musicians in different ways from a normal classroom setting during their quartet rehearsals.

"Working on chamber music with the Principal Cellist of VSO [Sebastian Stöger] has been an incredible experience. He can play music I didn't even know was possible with a beautiful tone, and being taught by him makes me excited for what I am capable of playing too," says student Elias Bowes from Maury High School. "He's shown us how to communicate with each other in a way that makes us one complex voice instead of simply five individual parts. It already feels like we are making music I could lose myself in like never before. This opportunity has been amazing, so I can hardly wait until our next rehearsal and final concert because this has been an amazing opportunity."

Orchestral Directors from the various high schools have also seen a positive change in students and how they rehearse in the chamber music quartets and in their music classes. Norview High School Orchestra Director Keara Smith says, "The Mary Goode Brooke Music for Young People Legacy Program has helped us create a tight knit group of talented musicians who strive for excellence."

Only in its inaugural year, the goal of this program has been to strengthen music education and further develop the musical talent of promising students who can benefit from additional support and instruction.



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A Free and open to the public performance, the Mary G. Brooke Recital, will be held at Booker T. Washington High School, 1111 Park Ave, Norfolk, VA 23504 on Tuesday May 12, 2026 at 7PM. All the student quartets and a string quintet, comprised of VSO musicians, will perform.

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Mary Goode Brooke dedicated her life to teaching and performing music. Born on August 17, 1925 in Norfolk, Brooke has a reputation as “an artist of unusual talent” from an early age. As part of the Young People’s Concert by the Norfolk Symphony, predecessor of the VSO, in 1940, Mary performed a special solo piano performance at Maury High School when she was just 15 years old. Brooke taught piano at the Williams School and was a member of the St. Paul’s Church choir. Brooke passed away on May 2, 2023, at the age of 97.

As the region’s most celebrated musical, educational, and entrepreneurial arts organization, the **Virginia Symphony Orchestra** continues to challenge expectations and push the boundaries of what an American orchestra can be. Innovation and excellence are at the heart of the VSO’s narrative. The VSO has received national attention for its unique mission serving a home area of 1.7 million across the diverse communities of southeastern Virginia. Through appearances at the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall and its commitment to adventurous programming, the VSO and its musicians have been highlighted in the media including The New York Times, The Washington Post, National Public Radio, and BBC Worldwide News.

As the largest performing arts organization in southeastern Virginia, the VSO and VSO Chorus present more than 150 concerts and events annually for more than 100,000 residents and visitors. Since 2019, the VSO has been recognized nationally for striving to reflect the region’s ethnic and racial diversity in its members, programming, and leadership. The Virginia Symphony Orchestra’s Fellowship Program for up to 4 early-career, underrepresented orchestral musicians work to advance the goal of increased diversity of orchestral musicians nationwide. This initiative is a continuation of the VSO’s commitment to creating extraordinary musical experiences with and for our entire community.

Celebrating his fifth year, Music Director Eric Jacobsen, The Macon and Joan Brock Chair, continues to expand the VSO’s vision to attract wider and larger audiences with engaging concert experiences and creative and relevant programming. Rounding out the artistic



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leadership team is Connie and Marc Jacobson Music Director Laureate JoAnn Falletta and Norfolk native Thomas Wilkins in the role of Principal Guest Conductor, reflecting the VSO's commitment to tell its community's stories and advance the important conversations that will promote understanding and belonging among all residents.