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### **Metropolitan Youth Symphony and Project Prelude Receive National Youth Leadership Council Award**

(Portland, OR)- Project Prelude, a new non-profit sponsored by Metropolitan Youth Symphony (MYS), was started last summer to provide free violin lessons to low-income children in the area. Metropolitan Youth Symphony's Symphony Orchestra violinist Cammie Lee (age 16) and Portland Youth Philharmonic's flutist Isabelle Zheng (age 17) saw an absence of elementary school music education in the area and decided to tackle the problem themselves. Working with a team of four student musicians, three of whom are MYS students, Project Prelude offers free weekly violin lessons to 4th, 5th & 6th graders at Aloha-Huber Park K-8 School in the Beaverton School District.

As the fiscal sponsor of Project Prelude, Metropolitan Youth Symphony's efforts, and the efforts of Ms. Lee and Ms. Zheng, were recently recognized by the National Youth Leadership Council as the recipient of the 2017 NYLC Youth Leadership for Service-Learning Award. As part of the award, Project Prelude will receive \$1,000 toward the sustainability of the program. MYS Music Director Raúl Gómez will join Lee and Zheng as they are honored at the National Service-Learning Conference, March 22-24, 2017, in Anaheim, California.

The value of community collaboration is a fundamental principle for the Project Prelude founders. Lee and Zheng have worked with MYS to create a community of support from both donors and volunteers. Project Prelude originally started as a GoFundMe campaign and has expanded to accept donations from musical partners both near and far. Locally, Kennedy Violins, Kerr Violins, Guitar Center, and the Beaverton School District have made generous donations of violins and rehearsal space, respectively. Beyond the Portland Metro Area, the Open String Foundation, a non-profit based in New York City that helps musicians in need, donated twenty-five violins for the young student musicians. Project Prelude also received a \$500 Summer of Service grant from Youth Service America (YSA) and The Walt Disney Company.

"It's invigorating to work with our kids and see their enthusiasm for music! I think that Project Prelude has allowed these students the opportunity to practice collaborating with others while learning how to express themselves in a different way. Many of our student teachers have also exhibited growth in their leadership skills and confidence in themselves," remarked Cammie Lee, who serves as Music Director for Project Prelude.

Isabelle Zheng, who serves as Executive Director added, "We were overjoyed to see so much support for our mission and our organization. It's wonderful to know that so many people believe that music education is a cause worth fighting for. Our current goal is to continue expanding, so we can make a difference in the lives of more young students."

Project Prelude is unique in that it is founded and operated by students. Through their vision for equity and hard work, Lee and Zheng have enrolled 33 students in the program. Visit Project Prelude at [www.projectprelude.org](http://www.projectprelude.org) for more information.

**About Metropolitan Youth Symphony (MYS):**

Metropolitan Youth Symphony is the fiscal sponsor of Project Prelude, providing administrative oversight, program guidance, and mentoring to Lee and Zheng. MYS shares Project Prelude's commitment to ensuring every student has access to music education. MYS educates, develops and promotes young musicians. MYS enrolls over 500 youth, ages 5-18, from the Greater Portland Metro area and SW Washington, in 12 orchestra, band, string, and jazz ensembles each year. MYS is one of the largest youth music organizations in the country and one of the few offering a jazz program. MYS's Music Equity Program, which includes a strong tuition assistance program and tuition free Saturday morning string class for low income children, ensures that all interested musicians have an opportunity to join MYS, regardless of their financial circumstances.

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