

# Guide to the Ithaca Community Orchestra Collection

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## COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

The Ithaca Community Orchestra (ICO) is an organization of amateur musicians who love the orchestral repertoire and are dedicated to weekly rehearsals. The orchestra was founded in 2001 by Annette Vogels, a professional orchestral bassoonist from Amsterdam, and John Webber, an English composer and the ICO's first music director. At the time of its founding, Ithaca had a professional orchestra but lacked one for other musicians, including the area's many music teachers.

Initially the weekly rehearsals were a program of the Ithaca Music Academy, at 2389 North Triphammer Road. In 2002, the orchestra separated from the Music Academy and was looking for rehearsal space, rarely available for a large ensemble that needs space every week. But late that year, Lakeside Nursing and Rehabilitation Center (later renamed Cayuga Ridge) at 1229 Trumansburg Road invited the orchestra to rehearse in its dining hall in order to bring the community into the Center for the benefit of its long-term residents. Later on rehearsals were held at Kendal at Ithaca, a retirement community at 2230 North Triphammer Road.

In 2004, the ICO's music director, John Webber left Ithaca, and most members left the orchestra as the ensemble's quality deteriorated. A few members who wanted an orchestra in which to play, asked Cayenna Ponchione, a young percussionist with a masters in conducting from Ithaca College who was the new music director of the Binghamton Community Orchestra, if she would be willing to take on the job of growing the ICO's musical quality and the size of its membership. The orchestra had just \$400 in its bank account, but Ms. Ponchione agreed to take on the directorship. Under her leadership, the orchestra formed a board (previously, the ICO's administration had been handled by its two founders). An accountant on the board worked with a retired lawyer who, pro bono, applied for and received non-profit corporate status from New York State and, subsequently from the IRS. The latter allowed the orchestra to receive donations and apply for grants. Until the IRS nonprofit status was received, the First Congregational Church of Ithaca served as sponsor when the orchestra applied for grants.

Under Ms. Ponchione and subsequent music directors, the orchestra grew in size and blossomed musically. In order to increase its visibility, it began to collaborate at concerts with other organizations, such as the Community Chorus, the Tompkins County Public Library, Opera Ithaca, and the History Center in Tompkins County. The Orchestra paid professional soloists to perform concertos with it. In addition to its performances in concert halls, the orchestra performed run-out concerts, which are duplicate programs, sometimes including the professional soloists, for underserved populations, such as residents of nursing homes.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Ithaca in March 2020 and the rehearsal space at Kendal closed its doors to outside groups, the orchestra maintained its membership by online lectures, social gatherings, and multiple small-group rehearsals using the application Zoom. Because Zoom had a time-lag, one musician would play unmuted while the others in the group would play along muted. In the fall of 2021, with all of its members vaccinated against the dominant strain of the virus, the orchestra started rehearsing again, this time in the basement of the First Congregational Church of Ithaca and with special masks for woodwind and brass players and bell covers for those instruments. Concerts have resumed, but as of this writing, the collaborations with other organizations and the run-out concerts have ceased temporarily while COVID and its variants continue to infect Ithacans.

This collection contains programs, posters and publicity postcards, grant applications with their ancillary documents, documents of the ICO's Woodwind Quintet, and the business papers for 2001 – spring 2005.

### CONTAINER LIST

Programming	Folder 1
Programs 2001 – 2005	Folder 2
Programs 2006 – 2018	Folder 3
Posters and Postcards	Folder 4
Tompkins County NYS Decentralization Grant Application 2002	Folder 5
Tompkins County NYS Decentralization Grant 2006	Folder 6
Tompkins County NYS Decentralization Grant 2007	Folder 7
Tompkins County NYS Decentralization Grant 2008	Folder 8
Tompkins County NYS Decentralization Grant 2009	Folder 9
Tompkins County NYS Decentralization Grant 2010	Folder 10
Tompkins County NYS Decentralization Grant 2011	Folder 11
BOCES Grant 2011	Folder 12
Tompkins County NYS Decentralization Grant 2012	Folder 13
Service League Grant 2012	Folder 14
Tompkins County NYS Decentralization Grant 2013	Folder 15
Tompkins County NYS Decentralization Grant 2014	Folder 16
Tompkins County NYS Decentralization Grant 2015	Folder 17
Tompkins County NYS Decentralization Grant 2016	Folder 18

Hess Legacy Fund of the Community Foundation of Tompkins County Grant 2016	Folder 19
Tompkins County NYS Decentralization Grant 2017	Folder 20
Tompkins County NYS Decentralization Grant 2018	Folder 21
Ithaca Community Orchestra Woodwind Quintet	Folder 22
Business Papers 2001 – spring 2005	Folder 23
Oversize posters (In OV Row DD, Bay 3, Shelf 6)	Folder 24