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## English School Ensemble Will Visit Portsmouth and Perform at UNH as Part of Musical Exchange

By [Michelle Gregoire](#)  
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DURHAM, N.H. -- The University of New Hampshire Symphony Orchestra will host an ensemble of 53 young teenagers from England later this month as part of an exchange program that will culminate in the spring with the orchestra's first international tour.

The Holmfirth High School Ensemble, composed of student musicians ages 11 to 16 from Holmfirth, in West Yorkshire, England, also will stay four days with host families in Portsmouth and perform at the Portsmouth Middle School.

The Holmfirth ensemble arrives in Portsmouth Tuesday, Oct. 24, according to Bob Eshbach, director of the UNH Symphony Orchestra and associate professor of music. On Thursday, Oct. 26, the English students will accompany their hosts to classes and will give a performance at the middle school at 1 p.m.

Although all the English students have been placed in local homes, hosts are still needed for a couple of adults who will accompany the ensemble. Anyone who can provide a room may call Eshbach at 862-3241.

The ensemble will visit UNH Wednesday, Oct. 25, and will give a concert at Johnson Theatre at 8 p.m. The performance will include a mixture of instrumental and vocal music as well as a short play, a 20-minute version of Shakespeare's "The Tempest." The UNH Symphony Orchestra also will perform. Admission is free but donations are welcome.

The 55-member UNH Symphony Orchestra is planning a 10-day concert tour of England in May, 2001. Members will perform music by American composers, including Aaron Copland and New Hampshire native George Whitefield Chadwick. The orchestra will play in some of England's finest concert halls, including the Holmfirth Town Hall in Huddersfield, and Regents Hall in London. Other highlights of the trip are tours of Parliament and St. Paul's Cathedral in London, and a Shakespearean play at the Globe Theatre.

To pay the bill, the orchestra is seeking contributions from supporters of the arts and concert patrons. "For 80 years, the orchestra has given free concerts and opera in the Seacoast region," says Eshbach. "Now we need to raise at least \$70,000 to make it feasible for every member to go."

It will be the first overseas tour for the 80-year-old orchestra, which is a true town-gown organization. Although most of its members are music majors, they play alongside professional musicians and talented community residents, such as violist Frances Lebel of Portsmouth, who has been a member of the orchestra for nearly 60 years, says Eshbach.

UNH faculty are also represented in the orchestra. Mary Rasmussen, a retired professor of music, and Curt Givan, professor of plant biology, both play the cello, a section that has the highest percentage of community members and professionals. Gary Hodges, a professional cellist and UNH graduate, leads the section.

The diverse background is an integral part of the orchestra's identity, says Eshbach. "The professionals bring a standard to the orchestra. The amateur players bring a love of music to it. And the musicians who have been with us so long provide continuity."

More information about the orchestra's tour is available on the Web at <http://www.unh.edu/unhso>.

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