

Camp 2026 Registration Procedure

Last year's camp was our highest number of campers since before Covid, and we turned away more than thirty potential campers. We are excited about the increasing numbers of WCAMS members, and we are considering various ways to offer a WCAMS experience to as many people as possible, but we feel strongly that increasing camp attendance is not the solution. Last year felt crowded: there were long lines at meal-time, the orchestra barely fit on the stage, and there are only so many performance hours available.

We would like to slightly decrease camp attendance in 2026, but we want to be fair to those who weren't able to attend last year, and we want to continue to build our Children and Youth programs. We also don't want Registration to be like booking campsites: everyone poised at their computers at 8am on opening day!

How it will work:

Registration will open on March 28, and there will be a three-week window during which no applicants will be accepted to camp. Campers will be chosen based on the following criteria:

1. Volunteers crucial to the organization of camp
2. Instrument balance
3. Accommodation needs and requests (private rooms and accessible rooms)
4. Priority to families with children and/or youth
5. Priority to those who did not attend camp in 2025
6. Best fit for an inclusive, collaborative, inspiring and self-sustaining camp

Acceptance notifications will begin to go out after April 18. If instrument caps are filled, applicants will be waitlisted, and as spots open up, will be taken from the waitlist using the same priority criteria. First-come-first-served will only be a criterion of last resort (all other things being equal).

Registration will remain open until June 30.

If you have a pre-formed chamber group, we cannot guarantee everyone will be accepted, but you will have a better chance if everyone registers within the first three weeks (ie: before April 18).

Clarification of Camp Acceptance Priorities

There have been a lot of questions about the new acceptance policy, and we would like to provide clarification:

The primary purpose of the new policy is to give campers who did not attend the previous year's camp a chance to attend camp. All other acceptance criteria have always been in place.

The new three-week application period allows for evaluating all campers with the same criteria regardless of when they applied. After the three-week period, acceptances to camp will be evaluated with the criteria on a first-come first-serve basis.

FAQ:

1. Are these criteria new?

Admittance to camp has never been solely first-come-first-served. In order to have a functioning, balanced music camp, our Registration Committee has always used criteria like this to juggle the different needs and constraints of camp.

Prioritizing those who didn't attend last year's camp is the only new criterion, created in response to the large waitlist of campers who didn't get to go to camp last year. We want to allow everyone a fair opportunity to attend camp, and this may mean some campers may not be able to attend every year.

2. Does "priority to those who did not attend camp in 2025" mean I can only go to camp every second year?

No, not necessarily. In order to encourage new faces at camp, priority will be given in each Instrument/voice cap to those who did not attend in 2025 during the first 3-week period. However, if those caps are not filled within the first 3-week period, applicants will be admitted as per our usual acceptance criteria.

3. If I volunteer now, does that guarantee me a place at camp?

No. The phrase "volunteers crucial to the organization of camp" refers to people who are already working in specific operational roles that support camp planning and logistics months in advance. These are roles such as site contract negotiations, food and accommodation coordination, faculty hiring, music coordination, website management, communication, finances, registrar, publicity and other logistics that begin well before registration opens. The volunteers in these positions have been working since last year's camp ended, because it takes a year to organize a one-week camp.

4. Why are families with children and youth getting priority over individual campers?

Since children/youth cannot come alone, accepting a family means their parent/guardian may take priority over another applicant with the same instrument/voice. Families are only prioritized until we reach our cap on children and youth, ensuring that there are enough children & youth to run the Children/Youth classes.

5. How is the "inclusive, collaborative, inspiring and self-sustaining camp" criterion applied?

This criterion allows us to consider an applicant who may not fit other priorities but will contribute to building a cohesive community, or making camp more diverse and interesting, or providing valuable mentorship; above all it ensures that all our decisions reflect WCAMS values.

6. If there already aren't enough spaces at camp to accommodate everyone who wants to come, why are you advertising?

Our advertising this year is limited and targeted to those categories of instruments we always have a hard time filling.

We are also targeting children and youth, because a robust Children/Youth program is a key part of the WCAMS family camp experience, and because, looking to the future, it's important to nurture the next generation of WCAMS campers.

7. Why can't you just let everyone come to camp who applies?

The board's unanimous opinion was that last year's camp was beginning to be too big to preserve the WCAMS experience. Orchestra was spilling into the wings of the stage, choir was spilling off the risers, there were not enough orchestra parts for the woodwinds who wanted to play, the chamber music concerts were very long, and other performance opportunities (mini-concerts and Cabaret) were not sufficient for demand. There were also long lines at meals both for obtaining one's meal, and returning meal trays, which caused people to have rushed meals or be late for classes.