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The Florida Orchestra to teach violin classes through Prodigy Cultural Arts Program

TFO will provide free group lessons, musical activities to at-risk kids.

ST. PETERSBURG, FL – For the first time, The Florida Orchestra will offer group violin classes and other musical experiences to eligible children and teens in Hillsborough County for free, thanks to a partnership with the University Area Community Development Corporation's (CDC) Prodigy Cultural Arts Program.

"This is a pivotal moment for The Florida Orchestra," said TFO President & CEO Michael Pastreich. "We have a long history of working with and performing for students throughout Tampa Bay, but this is the first time that we will directly teach music to students in a class setting."

Starting this summer, the orchestra will teach group violin classes to at-risk children and teens ages six to 19 at Prodigy Cultural Arts sites in the Tampa area. The orchestra also will offer the Instrument Petting Zoo, which gives students the opportunity to see, touch and play instruments. Students may participate in and attend orchestra performances, and more musical activities may be developed based on student interest. All will be provided free for the students.

The free violin lessons will be offered June through September at select locations. For more information on how to sign up through the Prodigy program, please visit www.uacdc.org/prodigy.

"Having TFO as a partner broadens our already diverse class offerings, and introduces youth to a music discipline that they likely haven't participated in before," said Mike Trepper, Prodigy director. "We look forward to exposing Prodigy youth to TFO concerts, their Instrument Petting Zoo and the classes themselves. It is a win-win for both Prodigy and TFO as we work together to empower young people to reach their full potential."

The University Area CDC and Hillsborough County jointly will provide \$80,000 in funding for the activities, including instruments and other class supplies. The funding also allows the orchestra to hire a violin instructor and part-time coordinator dedicated to the partnership.

Prodigy, a research proven diversion and prevention program, uses an innovative approach to empower, educate and enable at-risk youth, providing a doorway to a better world. Youth ages five to 18 years of

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age experience performing and visual arts, taught as a tool for self-expression, to learn communication, exploration, problem solving, and conflict resolution skills. Now celebrating its 18th year, Prodigy is transforming young lives and now reaches across 10 counties.

“We’re excited about the Prodigy partnership because it directly uses music to improve students’ lives. Music is a great tool to teach communication and problem-solving skills, and can be a positive outlet for creativity,” said Erin Horan, TFO’s community engagement director.

The Prodigy activities are a key component as TFO builds a strong structure of community and education programs as part of its core mission, guided by Music Director Michael Francis and Horan. The orchestra performs free hospital, park and school concerts, and works with schools and youth orchestras through side-by-side concerts and more. In Pinellas County, this is the first full year of TFO’s teaching artist program, which has helped build and guide strings programs in schools. Last season, TFO served 80,000 people through community programs – most for free.

The Prodigy activities are in addition to the orchestra’s season of 130 concerts, performed by 66 full-time professional musicians as the premier – and largest – orchestra in Florida, celebrating 50 years in Tampa Bay this season. TFO performs series of classical, popular, and morning coffee concerts in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Clearwater.

For more information about the Prodigy Cultural Arts Program, please visit www.uacdc.org/prodigy.

For more Florida Orchestra news and features, [click here for the TFO Blog](#).

[About The Florida Orchestra](#)

Celebrating its 50th anniversary in the 2017/18 season, The Florida Orchestra is recognized as Tampa Bay’s leading performing arts institution, the largest professional symphony orchestra in Florida, and one of the most vibrant and innovative orchestras in America. Under the leadership of Music Director Michael Francis, it performs more than 130 concerts a season, with series of classical, popular, and morning coffee concerts in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Clearwater, as well as free Pops in the Park concerts. Dedicated to bringing music to all people, connecting to the community is a priority, with pre-concert talks, family and youth concerts and other educational activities. Kids and teens get in free to classical Masterworks concerts with Classical Kids tickets. To subscribe or buy tickets: 727.892.3337 or 1.800.662.7286; floridaorchestra.org.

[About University Area CDC](#)

University Area CDC offers support for thousands of Tampa Bay area residents through youth programs, adult education and resource assistance. Its primary mission is the redevelopment and sustainability of the at-risk areas surrounding University of South Florida's Tampa campus. For more information about UACDC, a 501(c)(3) public/private partnership, visit www.uacdc.org or call 813.558.5212.