

Stillwater Area High School Varsity Orchestra

Orchestra Handbook

2016-17 School Year

Zach Sawyer, Orchestra Director

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sahsorchestras.weebly.com

“So long as the human spirit thrives on this planet, music in some living form will accompany and sustain it and give it expressive meaning.” – Aaron Copland

Dear Orchestra Member,

Welcome to the 2016-17 Stillwater Area High School Varsity Orchestra. It is my goal to make your experience in the Stillwater orchestra program as successful and enriching as possible. I will work hard to achieve this goal, and I know that you will do the same.

The limits we set for ourselves are often self-imposed. It is the goal of this class to help each of you see a new vision of what you can accomplish. This will mean different things for each member of the orchestra – some will learn that you can achieve a higher standard of excellence through self-discipline. Others will learn that working within a group allows them to exceed what they can accomplish as an individual. Intellectual growth, musical progress, maturing as a person – are all a part of the time we spend together.

This handbook is an important resource regarding the policies and procedures of the SAHS Orchestra Program. Please read through this handbook and return the last page indicating that you understand the information and agree to adhere to the policies described.

The SAHS Orchestras succeed because of the collective contributions of *all* members. In his book *The Art of Possibility*, conductor Ben Zander writes: “In the game of contribution, you wake up each day basking in the notion that you are a gift to others.” As we embark on this new school year, I challenge you to make music not just for yourself, not just for your audience, but for the 55 other members of this orchestra family. We must establish an orchestra feeling, a respect for each other, a commitment to each other and to the music, and a personal discipline that seeks to accomplish great things.

Sincerely,

Mr. Sawyer

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2016-17 Varsity Orchestra Calendar

The following calendar of orchestra events will assist you in planning your schedule for the coming year. Please make a note of these dates and notify me of any conflicts immediately. I will always give a minimum of two weeks notice for any schedule changes. The Calendar is also posted online at sahsorchestras.weebly.com.

Sep. 8	Tuxedo and Dress fittings (during class)
Sep. 23-24	SAHS Music Department Rummage Sale at Washington County Fairgrounds. All music department students are required to work a 2 hour shift.
Nov. 1, 7:30 pm	Fall Orchestra Concert at St. Andrew's Church in Mahtomedi (all orchestras)
Dec. 5, 8:00 pm	Varsity Orchestra Holiday Concert
Feb. 25	MSHSL Solo & Ensemble Contest at White Bear Lake High School South Campus
TBD (March):	MSHSL Large Group Orchestra Contest
Apr. 17, 7:00 pm	Varsity & Friends Concert
April 18	Minnesota Orchestra Concert at SAHS (During School Day)
Apr. 18	Minnesota Orchestra Performance and Workshop at SAHS (during school day)
May 18, 7:30 pm	Symphonic and Varsity Orchestra Spring Concert

Contact Information

Mr. Sawyer's Contact Information:

Email: sawyerz@stillwaterschools.org

Office Phone: (651) 351-8202

Remind: I class will be using remind this year to send out important information, reminders, etc. Students should join the remind to receive important updates regarding Varsity Orchestra. Parents are also encouraged to join to stay in the loop with what is happening in class. To join the remind for Varsity orchestra, text **@varorch16 to 81010**. In case of emergency, Mr. Sawyer can be texted using the remind. (Emergencies only, please)

Google Classroom: we will be using google classroom this year for a variety of assignments, discussions, etc. To join, log in to your school account, go to google classroom, and enter this code: **tisd49**

SAHS Orchestras Website: **sahsorchestras.weebly.com**. To access important files for Varsity Orchestra, follow the "Varsity Orchestra" tab and click on "files to download." You will need to be logged in to your SAHS google account.

Course Objectives

- Technique
 - Use vibrato and balanced motion to create beautiful tone in our performance pieces.
 - Increase speed in playing 3 octave scales.
 - Developing an orchestral sense of intonation.
 - Utilize many orchestral bowings, including:
 - Spicatto (multiple kinds)
 - Sautille
 - Martele
 - Brush stroke
 - Ricochet
 - Others as needed
 - Increase facility in both the left and right hand
 - Developing efficient and effective practice habits.
- History and Theory
 - Establish a firm understanding of basic music theory to enhance our performances.
 - Using our understanding of form and structure to inform our performances.
 - Understanding the history and context of our repertoire to better communicate the heart and intention of the composers through our performances.
- Performing and Responding to Music
 - Develop an appreciation for quality musical performance.
 - Examine what music is and how it communicates profound human emotions.
 - ***Learning how to listen to music to gain more insight and enjoyment from it.***

Grading Policies:

Your grade in this class will be determined from the following categories:

- 30% Practicing and Participation
- 30% Formative Playing Assessments
- 20% Summative Playing Assessments
- 10% Written Quizzes and Reflection Assignments
- 10% Written Final Exam

Practicing and Participation (30%)

Practicing: practicing accounts for 15% of your grade. At the end of each quarter, you will turn in a practice report indicating how many minutes you practiced and what your practicing goals were that quarter.

Participation: this category accounts for 15% of your grade and includes your attitude and participation in rehearsals and includes the level of preparation, respect, punctuality, attitude, and focus you bring to the orchestra room every day. This category also includes concert attendance. *An unexcused absence from a dress rehearsal or concert will result in an automatic zero in the participation category.*

Formative Playing Assessments (30%)

Playing quizzes function as formative assessments. Formative assessments help students monitor their progress towards mastery of learning targets and help identify areas for additional growth. Our playing quizzes cover scales, technique, and repertoire. I will give at least one week of notice before a playing quiz. If you miss a playing a quiz, you are responsible for setting up a time with Mr. Sawyer to make up that quiz. Missed quizzes that are not made up within one week will be entered into the gradebook as a zero. Students will be allowed to retake a playing quiz one time if they wish to raise their grade; quiz make-ups must be scheduled with Mr. Sawyer outside of class and sectional time. Playing quizzes occur in one of four formats: as part of a testing group, individually in front of the class, individually in Mr. Sawyer's office, or as a video uploaded to Mr. Sawyer's google drive.

Summative Playing Assessments (20%)

A summative assessment is a culminating assessment that measures a student's understanding of a group of learning targets. We will have 2-3 summative assessments each semester covering scales and repertoire.

Written Quizzes, Written Assignments, and Reflection Assignments (10%)

There will be several written assignments throughout the year. Many of these will be through the google classroom. Written assignments will cover music theory, history. Additionally, we will have reflection assignments in which we discuss the music we are performing as well as our progress as an orchestra.

Written Final Exam (10%)

During our final exam period, you will take a written final exam covering aspects of music history and theory we discussed throughout the semester.

Recommended Equipment for Daily Success in Orchestra

1. Instrument and bow in good playing condition:
 - a. Strings should be no more than two years old.
 - b. Bow has been rehaired within the last two years.
 - c. Pegs working smoothly and easily.
2. Rosin
3. Soft Cleaning Cloth
4. Pencil!
5. Shoulder Pad (Violin/Viola), Rock Stop (Cello/Bass)
6. 1” Three Ring Binder (hard cover that will stay open on a music stand)
7. Five binder dividers to be labeled in this order:
 - a. Technique
 - b. Practice Parts
 - c. Theory/History
 - d. Playing Assessments
 - e. Other

Tardiness and Absence

Varsity Orchestra meets 2nd hour from 8:50 – 9:40 am. I realize that it takes time to get through the halls, get your instrument unpacked, and ready for rehearsal. As such, rehearsal will begin promptly at 8:52 am each day. The rehearsal agenda for the day will be on the whiteboard at the beginning of class; to save time make sure your music is in order *before* the rehearsal begins.

You are expected to be in your seat with your instrument and bow out, bow rosined, and music in order. The rehearsal begins with the concertmaster turning on an A to tune the orchestra. Any orchestra member who is not ready to play by 8:52 am will be marked as tardy, unless they have a pass from another teacher or the office.

Rehearsal Etiquette

Please see the handout titled “Stillwater Area High School – Rehearsal Expectations” for a thorough description of proper rehearsal conduct.

DO NOT HAVE YOUR PHONE OUT DURING THIS CLASS!

Concert Dress

Women: Black standard concert orchestra dress, black shoes, black hose.

Men: Black tuxedo, long white tux shirt with a button cover, black socks, black dress shoes.

All men and women are expected to wear black dress shoes; sneakers are not appropriate for concerts.

Savvi formalwear will be visiting SAHS on Thursday, September 8 to fit students for uniforms. Stay tuned for more details.

Music Policies

You will be assigned an orchestra folder to share with your stand partner. This folder contains the original copies of music we will be playing and will stay in the folder cabinet in the orchestra room at all times. When we travel, folders will travel in the SAHS folder box. Because we play standard orchestral literature, original copies of the music are *very* expensive and are often rented copies that we need to return.

You will be provided with photocopies of each piece will be performing. Each orchestra member will be required to maintain a three-ring binder in which practice copies will be kept. You are encouraged to keep your practice binder close by in order to mark in any changes that were made during rehearsal.

Any music issues, additional copies, etc. should be reported to the orchestra librarians.

Student Assistants

The orchestra needs a number of student aides to assist throughout the year. Most important are the positions of Music Librarian and Setup Crew. If you are interested in being a tremendous help to our orchestra program, please see Mr. Sawyer. If your class schedule allows, being a student assistant during the school day is very helpful.

Auditions for the 2017-18 Concert Orchestra

Auditions for next year's Concert Orchestra occur in April. This year's auditions are tentatively scheduled for April 10-14.

Audition packets will be made available in the orchestra room later this fall.

Private Lessons

If you are not taking private lessons, I STRONGLY encourage you to do so. Private lessons are a guaranteed way to make *enormous* improvements on your instrument quickly. Those taking lessons will receive extra credit. If you have questions or are interested in additional names and phone numbers please let me know. Lesson rates and instructional content will vary.

School Instrument Rentals (cello and bass)

Because of their difficulty in transportation, larger instruments are made available to students in the SAHS Orchestra Program for a rental fee. There is an \$80 usage fee for each instrument, which is used to cover the maintenance and repair costs associated with these instruments. Payments will be made using the SAHS FeePay system. Any damages due to improper care or negligence while in your possession will be charged to you.

We understand that this is a financial commitment for each orchestra family; please contact me if your situation prevents you from making this payment.

Con Amici Solo Competition

This year's Con Amici Solo Competition will be held on Wednesday, February 8 after school. The high school division of the competition is open to 10th and 11th graders. More information can be found on the Con Amici Solo Competition Registration Form. Please note that the registration deadline is Friday, January 27.

MMEA All-State Orchestra

Auditions for the 2017-18 MMEA All-State Orchestra will occur in March. More information on auditions will be provided as the date gets closer.

Youth Orchestra Opportunities

Minnesota Youth Symphonies (MYS)

The Minnesota Youth Symphonies (MYS) orchestral training program is modeled after the best music conservatories in the world with the goal of educating the whole musician. The orchestras perform 3 major concerts each season at prominent concert venues in the Twin Cities for audiences of over 4,000 classical music patrons, family and friends annually. All four MYS orchestras rehearse at Highland Middle School in St. Paul on Saturday mornings September through April.

More information, including audition information, can be found at www.mnyouthsymphonies.org.

Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies (GTCYS)

The Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies (GTCYS) provide a youth orchestra experience for students throughout the twin cities. GTCYS has several different ensembles to accommodate students of varying ability levels. Orchestras rehearse on weeknights at different locations throughout the Twin Cities.

More information, including audition information, can be found at www.gtcys.org.

*Please sign this page and return to Mr. Sawyer no later than **Friday, September 2.***

I have read the Concert Orchestra Handbook. I understand the information and policies described and have reserved the dates on our family calendar. I agree to support the policies outlined here in an effort to work together with our orchestra director to create an environment focused on positive musical growth.

Student's Name: _____

Student's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____ Date: _____