

MHS Orchestra

Handbook

2015-16

ORCHESTRA

AT MARQUETTE HIGH SCHOOL

Marquette High is home to three orchestras—Chamber Orchestra, Concert Orchestra and Symphonic Orchestra. Musicians from our orchestras regularly participate in St. Louis All Suburban Honors Orchestra, Missouri All State Orchestra and the Saint Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra. Our Symphonic Orchestra has been selected to perform at the Missouri Music Educators Association convention, they have performed in Symphony Hall in Boston, and in 2010 received a perfect score at the New York City Heritage Festival, performing Tchaikowsky's *Serenade for Strings*. Below is a description of each of the orchestras as found in the Rockwood Orchestra Curriculum:

I: Chamber Orchestra (9, 10, 11, 12) 1 Unit, Full Year

Prerequisite: Eighth Grade Concert Orchestra or evidence of equivalent training satisfactory to the instructor.

This is a performing orchestra. Training is provided in the technical skills and music reading skills needed to perform standard string orchestra literature. Students will perform music from a broad range of musical styles. Attendance at scheduled performances and after school rehearsals is mandatory and part of the required class work. Training is provided to prepare students to perform the more demanding literature performed by the Concert Orchestra and/or Symphonic Orchestra.

Students are encouraged to participate in appropriate enrichment opportunities, such as private lessons, AllSuburban Honors Orchestra, Solo and Ensemble Festival, Community Music School Youth Orchestra Program, and other various community orchestras.

Students must provide their own instruments.

This course may be repeated for elective credit.

II: Concert Orchestra (9, 10, 11, 12) 1 Unit, Full Year

Prerequisite: Students are accepted by audition only to this more advanced performing group.

Students must exhibit the technical and music reading skills necessary to perform standard orchestral literature, as established in audition requirements.

This is a performing orchestra. Further training is provided both in technical skills and in music reading. Advanced string orchestra literature is performed. Students will perform music from a broad range of musical styles. Attendance at scheduled performances and after school rehearsals is mandatory and part of the required class work. Training is provided to prepare students to perform the more demanding literature performed by the Symphonic Orchestra.

Students are encouraged to participate in appropriate enrichment opportunities, such as private lessons, AllSuburban Honors Orchestra, Solo and Ensemble Festival, Community Music School Youth Orchestra Program, and other various community orchestras.

Students must provide their own instruments

This course may be repeated for elective credit

III. SYMPHONIC ORCHESTRA (9, 10, 11, 12) 1 Unit, Full Year

Prerequisite: Students are accepted by audition only. Symphonic Orchestra is the most advanced performing group. Students must exhibit the technical and music reading skills necessary to perform advanced orchestra literature, as established in audition requirements.

This is a major performing orchestra. Further training is provided both in technical skills and in music reading. Advanced string orchestra literature is performed. Students will perform music from a broad range of musical styles. Attendance at scheduled performances and after school rehearsals is part of the required class work and is mandatory. Training is provided which will enable the student to continue music training and/or performance beyond the high school level.

Students are encouraged to participate in appropriate enrichment opportunities, such as private lessons, AllState Orchestra, All-Suburban Honors Orchestra, Solo and Ensemble Festival, St. Louis Symphony Community Music School Youth Orchestra Program, and other various community orchestras.

Students must provide their own instruments.

This course may be repeated for elective credit.

GRADING POLICY

Quarter grades will be based upon scores for:

Rehearsal Skills = 30%

Playing and written tests = 50%

Concert attendance = 20%

Rehearsal Skills

Each student has the opportunity to earn five participation points for each rehearsal period. In order to earn all five points, a student must arrive at rehearsal on time, be prepared (with all necessary equipment), and be fully engaged in the rehearsal process. See the section entitled “Thoughts on the Rehearsal Process” in this handbook for a better understanding of the expectations of this grading category.

Playing Tests

Major playing tests will be announced well in advance. Smaller playing tests may be administered with little or no advanced warning. This, of course, is not a problem if the musician is practicing outside of class on a regular basis. Pieces will be selected for specific issues they present or for general playing purposes. The student’s performance will be evaluated through the use of a scoring guide that will assign point values for intonation, tone quality, rhythm, pulse and various areas of musical effect.

Written Test

Students will occasionally be given written exams. These will cover theoretical and/or historical information discussed in class. There will be written final exams both semesters.

Concert Attendance

A concert is like an exam in that we are showing the culmination of our work on specific pieces of music. It is not like an exam in that the making of music is creating art in real time. You must be present in order to create this art with the rest of the group. There is no such thing as “make up” work for someone who misses a performance. Orchestra at Marquette is a curricular activity and must come before extra-curricular activities. Please see “Attendance Policies for Rockwood Schools Secondary Music Programs” at the back of this handbook.

THOUGHTS ON THE REHEARSAL PROCESS

Rehearsal versus Practice

In order for our rehearsals to be productive, it is important to understand the difference between rehearsal and practice. Practicing is what you do at home. The process of practicing involves training the brain and muscles to play the parts of the music that you cannot readily play at sight. Breaking down patterns of fast notes, ironing out shifts, and general technical difficulties are all things that need to be done on your own in order for the rehearsal to be effective. Never hesitate to ask for clarification of something that you don’t fully understand.

Rehearsal is the process of coming together as a group and working on the issues that enable us to sound like one instrument within a section (group intonation, articulation and quality of sound) and re-create the composer’s intentions (harmonic intonation, rhythmic pulse, phrasing and balance). Obviously, it is necessary for each member of the ensemble to be able to play their own part completely in order to have a true representation of the music. It is therefore necessary that each member of the ensemble do their best to work out those technical difficulties that prevent them from playing the music to the highest standard and in the manner prescribed by the composer and conductor.

Rehearsal Decorum

The environment in which music is rehearsed plays a large role in the productivity of the rehearsal process and the end product—the concert. We must be vigilant in working toward an environment where the musicians are totally

focused on the task at hand, and where each musician's contribution to the ensemble is respected and appreciated. In an effort to achieve that environment, the following guidelines should be practiced at all times:

1. All musicians in the ensemble make an important contribution to the group as a whole. Everyone needs to be respectful of the contributions of others.
2. Time is extremely valuable. Make every effort to be ready to rehearse as close to the tardy bell as possible.
3. Arrive at the rehearsal prepared. You need to have your instrument (along with a bow, of course, rosin, and a cleaning cloth), your music (don't rely on a stand-partner to bring it for you—be responsible for yourself) and a pencil to mark bowings, fingerings and other signs to remind you of the ideas we've covered in the rehearsal.
4. Be 100% present at rehearsals. Don't go on auto-pilot. Give real thought to the music-making process and don't allow yourself to be distracted by issues that do not directly impact our rehearsal. By the same token, don't allow yourself to indulge in behaviors that will in any way impede our rehearsal (talking, doing work for another class, or any activity that indicates that you are not fully engaged in our present undertaking). This will be most helpful in allowing us to accomplish more in the rehearsal and retain more information from day to day.
5. In addition to being respectful of one another, you will be expected to show respect for our equipment and facilities. This includes instruments (yours, those belonging to others and those belonging to the school), music stands, chairs and our rehearsal and performances spaces.

Concert Dress

Before you ever play a note . . . before you even think about setting the bow on the string . . . the moment you walk out on stage, you have made an impression on your audience. For better or worse, the way in which we are attired can sub-consciously or sometimes consciously create an impression on our listener that will influence the way they listen to us. Orchestras typically dress in black formal attire as a way of showing respect for the magnificent works we play, and to provide a sense of special occasion. We all wear the same color so that no one person stands out and the music itself is the only star of the performance. It is imperative that your concert clothing allows you to play your instrument with comfort. With that in mind, please follow these guidelines for concert apparel.

Ladies

You basically have two options:

1. A long solid black dress (no contrasting trim—nothing but black). The entire hem of the dress must be floor-length. Sleeves of the dress must be at least three-quarter length (past the elbow) or long (to the wrist). The neckline of the dress must be modest.
2. A long solid black skirt (entire hem to the ground) with a solid black top. The top must have a modest neckline, sleeves that are three-quarter length (past the elbow) or long (to the wrist). The top must tuck into the skirt or, if worn out, must be long enough that there is no gap between the two pieces when you are seated and playing your instrument.

With either option you choose, you need to wear black dress shoes with black nylons—no sandals. Any accessories you wear (belts, scarves . . . anything) must be black. Jewelry should be kept to a minimum and should be tasteful.

Gentlemen

Your concert attire is a black tuxedo (if you own a black suit and are more comfortable wearing that, you may do so) with a white tuxedo shirt (wing collar, pleated front) and a black bow tie (a black cummerbund is optional). All of the above items can be obtained through the school. You must also wear black dress shoes and black socks and, if wearing a belt, it must be black also.

Rockwood School District Concert Performance Expectations for Students Enrolled in Elective Music Courses

Concert performances allow unique opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery of knowledge and skills in their music class. They are the culminating event to several weeks of teaching and learning. Teachers use these performances to make summative assessments of student performance, which are then recorded as a portion of student grades on a report card.

These performances cannot be replicated in the classroom or repeated at another time. Music is a form of communication—the musician interprets the ideas of a composer and communicates them to an audience. The audience supplies feedback through the atmosphere of the performance environment and through their applause. That feedback is an important form of evaluation for a musician.

It is an expectation that all students enrolled in a performing ensemble are present and participate in all scheduled concerts. Within five school days of the announcement of the concert schedule, parents should alert the music teacher of any unavoidable conflicts.

- Students with an excused absence from school on the day of the performance may be excused from participation. A listing of excusable absences appears in the district’s Policies, Regulations, Procedures and Consequences Handbook.
- Students excused from a concert will not receive a score for the standards assessed during the performance.
- Concert performance may comprise up to 20% of the academic portion of students’ grades for the semester.
- Unexcused absences from concert performances will result in no academic credit awarded for that performance.
- In the event of an unexcused absence from a performance, or multiple excused absences, the future eligibility of the student in the class will be assessed.

Your signature below indicates you are aware of the expectations for concert performance related to this course.

Student Signature: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____