

Thomas Worthington High School 2019-2020 Orchestra Handbook

Julia Ellis, Director
jellis1@wscloud.org

Abigail McGreehan, Director
amcgreehan@wscloud.org

Website: www.worthingtonorchestra.com

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to provide members of the Thomas Worthington High School Orchestra a clear understanding of what the program expects from its members and what its members can expect from the program. This handbook is to facilitate communication and eliminate the possibility of student and parent misunderstanding of orchestra policies.

All orchestra members and parents are required to read and understand the responsibilities outlined in this handbook. With everyone's cooperation, we can hope to have a positive and successful year for everyone involved.

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTORS

We will do our best to provide you with a positive, productive rehearsal environment and process as well as the highest quality music education. As Pablo Casals said – “I don’t teach the cello because the cello can’t learn – I teach the child.”

In return, we ask that you fully participate in orchestra rehearsals and performances, work hard, and stay positive. You never know who is looking up to you – and **you have the power to make a positive difference in YOUR orchestra!**

If some of the following expectations seem high, keep in mind that these responsibilities are essential to your full development to become a better string player, musician, leader, student, and person.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Orchestra is a full year and four year course providing instruction in individual string instrument technical development, musical interpretive skills, ensemble training, musicianship, and leadership. Class instruction addresses these areas as they relate to each student's instrument within the orchestra program.

Selection of literature is based upon technical, musical, and performance considerations. During any particular year, the group performs a wide variety of music from all historical periods. While one musical period may be stressed for its contribution to individual skills, another may be used to develop of a particular aspect of musicianship or ensemble style.

This course is designed to develop skills in cooperative learning and leadership skills. Advanced students and section leaders have additional responsibilities in rehearsals and are encouraged to participate in extracurricular musical opportunities (musical theater, youth orchestras, etc).

REHEARSAL PROCEDURE

1. Be in place with equipment (instrument, bow, music, pencil), and as needed mute, rosin, and a soft cloth, and ready to begin rehearsal two minutes after the tardy bell. The concertmaster will be ready to tune the orchestra at that time.
2. Be courteous and respectful to fellow musicians, instruments, and our rehearsal and performance space.
3. Gum, candy, food and drink are never permitted in the music area.

Students are expected to have the proper equipment at each class. This includes an instrument and bow in good condition, music, pencil, mute, and rosin. Violin and viola players need to have an extra set of strings, a nametag on their case and a shoulder rest. If you do not have the proper equipment, see Mrs. Ellis or Ms. McGreehan for information on obtaining needed items.

For your instrument security, violin and viola players will be assigned a locker and lock. The instrument must be placed inside the locker and locked securely during the school day. Your instrument and anything stored in your locker is your own responsibility.

MUSIC

All music performed by the Thomas Worthington Orchestras will be provided by the school district. All original copies of music remain the property of the Worthington Schools. Students are expected to take good care of all music it is your textbook.

All original copies will be kept in school folders. No student is allowed to take his or her school folder home. The directors will provide practice copies. These copies are for home use only.

INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE

Members of successful orchestras require that students practice outside of the orchestra period. A few guidelines for your practice:

1. Frequent practice for a moderate length of time is of greater benefit than one or two extended sessions.

2. Your performance ability on your orchestra music will improve if you include scales, etudes, and solos in your practice. You can find great guidelines for this practice in **Ability Level Packets**. Playing quiz material also may come from Ability Level Packets.

3. Challenge yourself! Each year, you should advance by at least one **Ability Level Packet**. We recommend Freshmen start at Level 3.

ASSESSMENT (Chair Placements)

Chair placements/assessments serve two purposes:

1. To hear each student individually in order to learn and understand the student's strengths and areas for improvement;
2. And to effectively seat each section and orchestra.

Material for the assessment may include a scale, solo excerpt, and sight-reading. Solos may be chosen from orchestra repertoire, ability level Packets, or from the student's choice.

A rating scale will score each example played in the assessment. Areas of evaluation include tone, intonation, rhythm, dynamics, tempo, key signature, style, phrasing, articulation, posture, playing facility, and/or other musical and technical considerations chosen by the directors.

Chair placements held throughout the year will be included in your quarterly grade.

Special note: Although chair placements will aid in determining where you sit in the ensemble, you and your section will rotate seating frequently throughout the year. The final concert seating will be determined 1 or 2 weeks prior to each concert.

SECTION LEADER GUIDELINES by Cliff Colnot, Chicago Civic Orchestra

Principal string players should be active during rehearsals, not just passive instrumentalists. They should:

1. Have a technical mastery of the music and be prepared to demonstrate any passage for their sections in rehearsal;
2. Decide in consultation with other principals what bow strokes should be used and where in the bow every phrase should be played;
3. Indicate important entrances;
4. Arrive first at rehearsals;
5. Observe other principals during rehearsals and ask them or the conductor about musical inconsistencies;
6. Not play louder or more aggressively than everyone else in an attempt to lead the section;
7. Decide how the section should play all divisi passages (Generally speaking, two-way divisis are by person and three-way divisis are by stand).
8. Make decisions about finger patterns and bowings, and
9. Use body language that reflects interest, commitment, and energy in every rehearsal.

PRINCIPLES FOR STRING PLAYERS TO OBSERVE IN ORCHESTRA PLAYING by Cliff Colnot

1. Plan the use of the bow to accomplish what must be done musically. Do not indiscriminately and automatically use a full bow on every note. Do not crescendo on every up-bow or accent on every down-bow. Do not let changes of bow create changes in the original articulation. Be aware of the balance between bow pressure and bow speed. When moving toward the tip, increase bow pressure

to sustain the sound. Keep the bow moving through rests; do not choke off the sound with sudden stops.

2. To create a sustained musical line, begin one tone where the last leaves off. Just as wind players must be sure to sustain the sound through a legato phrase, string players must not let a change of bow disrupt the melodic line by suddenly playing louder or softer. String players need to be sure to play the last note in a diminuendo softer than the preceding one when there is a change of bow. Do not accent the last note of passages that continue in other sections; pass the line from one section or instrument to another. Do not land heavily on the last note of cadences.
3. Nourish the sound from beginning to end. Start vibrato before moving the bow and continue to vibrate after the bow leaves the string. Do not play some notes with vibrato and some without when continuity of expression must be maintained. Practice transferring vibrato so that it does not stop for finger changes, shifts, and string crossings.
4. Don't play your part in isolation. Determine who has the thematic material (most important) and who has the accompaniment. Listen to motor rhythms, repeated note values that constitute a metronome other parts must hear. Listen for other instruments that are playing the same music and fit with them.
5. Don't be a soloist competing to be heard. Focused sounds that project are fine when one must be heard as an individual, but fuzzy, airy, less focused sounds blend more effectively collectively. In soft passages, the player who can hear his or her own sound is playing too loud.
6. Remember that dynamics are relative. Adjust dynamics up or down one dynamic level depending on the relative importance of the part. Exaggerate dynamic contrasts so that the composition is not performed in varying shades of mezzo forte.
7. Fit in harmonically. It helps to know what the note of the chord one is playing in the harmony and whether one is playing in unison or octaves with other voices. Playing lower octaves one dynamic level louder helps balance and pitch of the upper octaves.
8. Look ahead, memorize, and look up. Buffer upcoming measures in your memory and look up for visual cues. When there is a structural turn or "corner" in the music, especially when accompanied by a ritard or accelerando, watch the conductor. Watch principal players at the front of the sections and play in the same part of the bow, with the same stroke. Semi-memorize passages when practicing in preparation for a rehearsal, looking at the music briefly, then looking away and playing.

PERFORMANCES and CONCERT ATTENDANCE

Performance is the natural culmination of the daily learning experience in rehearsal, and is an important part of the evaluation process. Both rehearsal and performance are necessary for a positive orchestra experience. A student who misses a performance not only negates previous efforts, but also affects the overall sound of the orchestra. Attendance and participation at performances and extra rehearsals is mandatory.

CONCERT PROCEDURE

All students must arrive 30 minutes prior to the scheduled beginning of the concert. This time is for tuning, music check, and proper warm up. Students who arrive late will have points deducted from their concert grade.

At the conclusion of each performance, all members are responsible for putting their chairs and stands back on the racks provided.

ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES

Attendance at all performances is mandatory. All concert and contest dates are printed on our concert calendar on www.worthingtonorchestra.com. Any changes in the dates or times will be given at least two weeks prior to the event. If changes cause a conflict, the conflict must be discussed with the director within two days after the change is announced. The only exception is large group and solo and ensemble contests in

which specific performances times may not be available until approximately 1 ½ weeks prior to the contest. Students are expected to be available during any possible performance time for these events.

Any students involved in athletics, other school and/or community organizations or who have work commitments must inform your coach, advisor, or supervisor well in advance about his or her orchestra performance schedule so conflicts may be avoided.

CONSEQUENCES FOR MISSED CONCERTS

Consequences will be given as a result of non-fulfillment of your obligation to attend and participate in all concerts and extra rehearsals.

The only time a student is excused from a performance is in the event of family emergency. A parent needs to inform the director preferably before the concert, or at least by the next school day.

The directors will make a final decision on whether or not an absence is excused. If the absence is excused, the director will assign the student make-up work either in the form of a playing test or a written paper. **If an absence is un-excused, the student will not receive credit and will not be allowed to make up the points lost due to the absence.**

CONCERT DRESS CODE

All students are required to wear the following for concerts:

- Black** dress shirt – plain, long sleeve. ¾ length sleeve blouses are acceptable.
- Black** dress pants or full length skirt – Leggings and/or black jeans do not count!
- Black** dress socks or tights – No white socks or athletic socks please!
- Black** dress shoes – No tennis shoes, sandals or flip-flops.

If you are not sure about a specific outfit or if you need clarification on the above, see the directors. Any student with inappropriate dress (i.e.- white socks, short skirt, sneakers, no ties) will be asked to change.

GRADING CRITERIA

All nine weeks grades are based on a point scale using the following criteria:

1. Musicianship / Service Credit – 30%
2. Equipment Upkeep and Accessories – 10%
3. Chamber Music/Sectional Evaluation – 20%
4. Scale/technique tests – 10%
5. Performances – 20%
6. Written formative and summative assessments – 10%

1. Musicianship includes:

1. Following rehearsal procedure, including promptness to class and class preparation.
2. Demonstrating correct posture, playing position, and performance skills.
3. Participating positively in rehearsal by marking music, following directions, and always being ready to play.

2. Equipment and Accessories Maintenance

This area is worth 10% of the nine weeks grade. Equipment includes instrument, a full ribbon of horsehair on bow, music, pencil, mute, rosin, spare strings, and a soft cloth. It also includes replacing broken strings and needed instrument repairs within a reasonable period of time. All strings need to be replaced every year. Old strings are very difficult to tune and to keep in tune. They also tend to "deaden" the tone of the instrument. Violinists and violists need to keep a spare set of strings in their cases.

3. Chamber Music/Sectional Evaluation

This area is worth 10% of the nine weeks grade. Each week, you will spend class time working on orchestra concert music with a small group. Your grade is dependent on your performance evaluation during your chamber group performance.

4. Scale/Technique Assessments

This area is worth 10% of the nine weeks grade. Playing tests may be completed individually in person, video taped, audio taped, completed using an online assessment tool, or completed in groups in orchestra or in sectionals. Quiz dates and formats will be announced ahead of time.

A rating scale and rubric will be used for each playing quiz. Areas of evaluation include but are not limited to tone, intonation, rhythm, dynamics, tempo, key signature, style, phrasing, articulation, posture, and playing facility. The rating scale awards 10 points in each area of evaluation, with 100+ total points possible.

Grade Scale:

A+ = 100%	C+ = 78-79%
A = 93-99%	C = 73-77%
A- = 90-92%	C- = 70-72%
B+ = 88-89%	D+ = 68-69%
B = 83-87%	D = 63-67%
B- = 80-82%	D- = 60-62%

5. Performances

Details on areas of evaluation for this section are given under the sections labeled "Concert Attendance" and "Performances".

IDENTIFICATION OF EQUIPMENT AND LOCKERS

All personal equipment should be clearly labeled with the student's name, address, phone number and school. This is for your protection. You should also have your instrument's make, model, serial number, and purchase price written down and filed at home. Having a good photo of the instrument and accessories is also a good idea. Instruments that are not locked up can, and have, disappeared. Specific information on the instrument may help the police recover the instrument.

All violinists and violists will be assigned a school lock and locker. The director will have all lock combinations on file. Each lock will be assigned to a specific locker so **do not put your assigned lock on a different locker. All students will also be required to lock their instruments in their locker with the lock securely fastened.**

SCHOOL MUSIC AND EQUIPMENT

Students are responsible for all school-owned equipment assigned to them. This includes instruments, rosin, bows, endpin stops, and mutes. Any equipment damaged or lost will be the responsibility of the student or students assigned to them. The student may either replace the equipment or may reimburse the cost of replacing or repairing the equipment to the orchestra fund.

All students will be assigned a specific folder with music. The music in the folders is all original copies from the publisher. It may cost from \$2.50 up to \$10.00 to replace a piece of music.

Generally, two people are assigned to a folder. **Both students** are responsible for the care of the music. Both students are responsible for making sure that the folder is put away and both are responsible if the folder or specific parts disappear.

PRIVATE LESSONS

Students are strongly encouraged to take private lessons. If you do not have a private teacher and are interested in beginning lessons, a list of teachers in this area is available from the directors.

ADJUDICATED EVENTS

SOLO & ENSEMBLE

Students in the vocal and instrumental music programs are strongly encouraged to participate in the OMEA Solo & Ensemble Adjudicated Events held every January or February. The purpose of this event is to promote and encourage students' improvement in the areas of musicianship and technique. The following guidelines are required for students to benefit from this experience:

1. Students must select music from an approved list of music published by the Ohio Music Educators Association. Your director has this list.
2. Students must be a member of the school orchestra in order to participate in string events.
3. Students must have a copy of their solo or ensemble for the adjudicator. The adjudicator's copy **must have every measure numbered or the overall rating will be lowered by one level**. Any ensemble copies must be in score form.
4. Music is divided into three categories **C, B, and A**, with **A** being the most difficult.
5. It is strongly recommended that a student at the high school level who is not taking private lessons or has not participated in contest enter "B" or "C" classification. The second or third year will provide ample time to advance to the "A" level.
6. Students receive a rating and a written comment sheet about the performance. The rating system used is I, II, III, IV, and V with a I being the top rating or "superior". Students who participate and receive a I or a II rating are entitled to purchase a medal. All participants receive a certificate.
7. Students who participate, as a member of an ensemble should be aware of the importance of regular group practice three (3) months prior to the contest. Two (2) or three (3) rehearsals per week will result in an outstanding experience for all!!
8. Soloists are not required to have accompanists, but are strongly encouraged to use piano accompaniment for the best overall experience.
9. Freshmen have a choice of entering in either high school or middle school contest, but may not participate in both.

STATE ORCHESTRA LARGE GROUP PERFORMANCE

The Thomas Worthington Orchestra has the option of participating in the Ohio Music Education Association State Orchestra Adjudicated Event held every February or March. The decision to participate is made on a year-to-year basis and with the following considerations:

1. Educational benefits to be gained for the students in the particular group.
2. Instrumentation of the particular group.
3. Group characteristics such as rehearsal technique throughout the year, presenting a teachable attitude, an ability to listen and take directions, and a willingness to work hard as a group in order to achieve something that cannot be achieved as individuals.
4. Music ability level of the particular group to handle music required in regular classroom lessons. Other orchestra literature cannot be excluded at the expense of preparing for the event.

TRANSPORTATION

All students must travel to and from performances or other activities on school buses, not in personal cars. The director must have a signed permission slip with the medical information filled out in his or her

possession from each student by the day of the trip. Any student who does not have a signed form turned in will not be able to participate.

Any student who needs to return from a performance or activity with a parent or guardian **MUST** submit a permission slip signed by the parent or guardian one week prior to the trip. Permission will then be granted by the administration, not the orchestra director.

REGIONAL, ALL-STATE, N.H.S.H.O.

At the beginning of each school year, OMEA sends to all high school orchestra directors a letter and applications for students to audition for the South-Central Region Orchestra. This orchestra is made up of the best instrumentalists from Franklin County to counties extending down to the Ohio River. Over two hundred (250) students audition each year and only one hundred (100) are selected.

Every student auditioning must have a completed audition form, checks covering the audition fee and must be a member of the school organization. A student must audition on the instrument that the student plays as a member of their school orchestra (A student who is a member of the school band on trombone cannot audition for the orchestra on violin unless the student is a member of the school orchestra on violin.) These are the rules set by OMEA.

The top string players in each of the five regional orchestras are selected to participate in the OMEA All-State Orchestra. This elite group performs for the OMEA Convention held every February at a major city in Ohio. This is a wonderful opportunity to perform with some of the best young instrumentalists in the state.

Every two years, students who participated in the All-State Orchestra are given the opportunity to audition for the National High School Honors Orchestra held at the MENC Convention. This convention has been held in cities all over the country. This group is made up of the best high school instrumentalists in the entire country. Thomas Worthington High School has had seven students accepted to perform with this group in past years.

CSYO, YPCO, AND CADET ORCHESTRAS

Students in the orchestra have the opportunity to audition for the Columbus Symphony Youth Orchestra (grades 9-12), The Youth Orchestra of Central Ohio (grades 9-12), and for the Columbus Symphony Cadet Orchestra (grades 7-10). These orchestras are made up of members from all over Columbus and outlying areas. All students are required to audition and must be a member of the school orchestra. Auditions are held every spring.

These groups have weekly rehearsals and several weekend retreats. Performance schedules are quite challenging, yet rewarding and the groups often travel outside of Franklin County for concerts and clinics.

SENIOR SOLOS

Each year the director offers the opportunity to seniors to prepare a senior solo or feature piece. This is an excellent opportunity for seniors to extend their performance ability to a solo or chamber music setting.

Orchestra Concertos: Students only qualify for this privilege through auditions held in October, and must have a private teacher. Seniors may choose from, but are not restricted to, our school concerto library. Music can also be borrowed or rented, pending budget restrictions. Senior Solo auditions will be announced in September.

All seniors, regardless of musical selection, must have music choices selected by the end of the first semester. It is highly recommended for seniors to choose these selections earlier and to perform at OMEA Solo and Ensemble Contest in January.

One Concerto soloist may be chosen to perform with the orchestra on the May Festival Concert. All seniors will perform in a chamber group on the Awards Banquet/Senior Night in the spring.

SENIOR AWARDS

At the end of every school year, senior awards are given which include awards to all seniors, the National School Orchestra Association Award, the Director's Award, and the Arion Award to the most outstanding seniors.

Senior recognition will be held during the Senior Solo concert. This program is a combined effort with WKHS. The program offers an opportunity to feature several senior soloists and functions as an awards night.

MAJORING IN MUSIC IN COLLEGE

Music majors have a basic core requirement in academics to complete for their degree along with studying all aspects of music. Majoring in music includes: playing piano, solfeggio singing, music theory, music history, and study on your major instrument and playing in the university ensembles. It is necessary that students with this interest take high school music theory, piano lessons and private lessons on their instrument. Please see me for more information.

HOW TO CONTACT YOUR TEACHERS

Mrs. Ellis: School voice mail number: **450-6280**.

E-mail address: jellis1@wscloud.org

Ms. McGreehan:

E-mail address: amcgreehan@wscloud.org