



Seven Lakes High School Orchestras

January 17, 2018

Dear Future Seven Lakes Orchestra Member,

It seems that this year has flown by very quickly, and it's very hard to believe that you're about to embark upon your high school career! This packet from the Seven Lakes Orchestras has been provided to help you and your parents take an in-depth look at what orchestra at Seven Lakes is all about.

We have been very blessed at Seven Lakes High School. In our thirteenth year of existence, the orchestras have earned many accolades, and have presented many outstanding performances. Our ensembles have won countless "Sweepstakes" trophies at various UIL and festival contests. Students selected to perform in the Musical always do an outstanding job: "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown!," "Once Upon a Mattress," and "Guys and Dolls," "The Music Man," and "Big Fish" were nominated for Outstanding Orchestra for the prestigious "Tommy Tune" awards, the high school equivalent of the Oscars. The Pit Orchestra won this prestigious award for "Once Upon a Mattress." Our orchestras consistently rank in the top 10 orchestras among all high school orchestra programs in Texas, outranking all other Katy ISD schools. In 2016, the Symphony Orchestra was selected at the Honor Full Orchestra for TMEA.

Our talent has proven itself with dozens of Region Orchestra members, Area Orchestra Members, and several All-State Orchestra members over the years. Hundreds of medals are earned at our UIL Solo and Ensemble Contest. We've earned our 12th consecutive Sweepstakes trophy at both Full Orchestra and String Orchestra UILs! In addition to the field trips to world-renowned artists like the Tokyo String Quartet, the Eroica Trio, Joshua Bell, the Houston Symphony, and Itzhak Perlman, and 2Cellos, students enjoy social events like Movie Night, the O-Lympics, White Elephant parties, and more. Our spring trips have brought us to San Antonio, Bandera, Dallas, Chicago, New Orleans, and Orlando!

Our compassion has come through with flying colors by volunteering throughout the year at the Houston Food Bank. In the past, students have also contributed to "Toys for Tots" and Katy ISD's Santa Cops Program. Outside music, our students have worked hard toward being the best students at Seven Lakes with far-ranging achievements in academia and sports. Nevertheless, students still enjoy performing great repertoire, making new friends, and being part of a hard-working, fun-loving, and musical family!

Please check out the following pages of Frequently Asked Questions. We invite you to be a member of one of the most exciting groups at Seven Lakes. As a flagship of Katy ISD, we want YOU to be a part of making history!

Musically Yours,

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Thank you for your interest in the Seven Lakes Orchestras! We are a hard-working, motivated group that loves to perform! We've simply had a remarkable career that has catapulted us to the top! Please continue reading for answers to a few *Frequently Asked Questions*.

How large is the orchestra? Currently, the Seven Lakes Orchestras are divided into six classes during the school day. With over 200 students enrolled, we are proud of all of our performing groups. Next year, we will again have six string orchestras and one full orchestra: Camerata, Philharmonia (2), Lyrica, Cambiata, Sinfonia and of course, the Symphony. Almost all of our groups compete at UIL Contests and are engaged with numerous concerts and performances. With six periods of orchestra to accommodate your schedule, there is a home for every player in the Seven Lakes Orchestras!



What can I expect as a member of the high school orchestra program? You have come from an outstanding middle school orchestra program with terrific directors and an outstanding musical background. Just expect much of the same commitment to excellence and pursuit of knowledge!

At the high school level, there is a strong emphasis on performance, with units over string orchestra literature, full orchestra literature, and chamber music. Refinement of rudimentary skills is stressed. Additionally, all students study music theory (the math behind the music) in depth, and listen to learn about the way music works (music appreciation). This

Hello! My name is Stephen Chang, and I'm a four-year member of the Seven Lakes Orchestras. Now, as a prospective orchestra member, you may be thinking: why orchestra? Is this class worth my time in high school? How will taking it be beneficial for me? These questions and all those related to it are completely valid. What I can tell you is that orchestra has been one of the most important and influential mentors of my life, other than my loving parents. Having the privilege of joining this organization, I feel that my goals in the future have been more clearly defined as a result of developments in my personal character that I wouldn't have gotten anywhere else. Orchestra, to me, is a place where you can create everlasting friendships with new people and unforgettable memories; above all, it is a chance for you to leave a profound mark in your life.

The Seven Lakes Orchestras are more than what meet the eyes: it is a group that pushes its boundaries in orchestral music and has a legacy of excellence in music. Whether it is Mahler's "Titan" Symphony, Bernstein's "West Side Story", or many other acclaimed pieces, we push our musical comprehension and skill to new limits every year, something that I'm extremely proud of. From being the 2016 TMEA Honor Orchestra, playing a repertoire of legendary pieces, debuting newly composed pieces, to participating in national-level competitions, the Seven Lakes has created a strong legacy of talented musicians, and you can be a part of that legacy as well.

Orchestra as an organization is much more than playing music in class. To a majority of our members, it has been their second family, a large, tight-knit family of over 230 people. Coming into my first year of orchestra as a freshman, I expected to come to class each day to play music, and nothing more. Being a senior now, I can say I was definitely wrong. Over time, ensembles, chamber music groups, and your stand partners will all become a supportive group of friends that you yourself may even consider family. Also, the orchestra experience goes outside the classroom: car wash fundraisers, fun socials at places like Main Event, and banquets only scratch the surface of the social aspects you can enjoy in orchestra. With that being said, orchestra has given me one of the greatest gifts a student could ever have: friendships that I know will last beyond high school.

To be frank, I only entered orchestra with the intent of gaining my necessary credit for fine arts, but as you can see, my perspective has completely changed. It really is an organization that forms many friendships and unforgettable memories, creating a positive impact in any orchestra member's life. But my words can only say so much: as you start your high school experience, I encourage you to join orchestra, as it would be an adventure you would never regret taking.

- Stephen Chang, Orchestra President,
Class of 2018

balance between performance and the more academic curriculum of music makes each student a well-rounded musician.

Do students have to audition to be part of the Seven Lakes Orchestras?

Students are assigned to orchestras according to ability, attitude, and instrumentation. In order to be placed correctly in orchestra, an audition is necessary to ascertain the appropriate-level ensemble. Auditions each year consist of a performance of an etude or solo, and sight-reading (for pianists only). This audition takes place in April for the upcoming Fall semester. Audition information will be distributed to all interested students before Spring Break.



Does the No Pass/No Play rule affect my participation in orchestra? Orchestra students must pass ALL classes in order to participate in extra-curricular activities of the orchestra: contests, paid performances, and auditions for Region, Area, and State. Class time instruction and all after-school rehearsals and sectionals are considered “curricular” and students participate in these regardless of academic eligibility.

What is Full Orchestra? Our Full Orchestra (our Symphony Orchestra) is a tradition that was established in the very first year of our existence. The varsity-level winds and strings combine to perform symphonic literature in each semester. We have already had several performances this school year, and were blessed to win our 12th consecutive “Sweepstakes” trophy at the annual UIL Concert and Sight-reading Contest! Every other year, we present our huge biennial Masterworks concert, alongside the choir department. There is no additional class to register for because this orchestra meets on Monday nights from 5:30 to 7:30p.



Collaboration with the Dance Department at their annual Spring Show!

What is the Musical and how can I participate? The Fine Arts Department puts on a musical every other year. Our first production of “You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown” won us several nominations for the prestigious Tommy Tune Awards (think of it like the Oscars for high school musical), including **Best Orchestra**. The Pit Orchestra is comprised of selected Varsity Band and Sinfonia Orchestra members only; but ANY student is encouraged to audition for a role on stage.

Can a student participate in Athletics and Orchestra? ABSOLUTELY! It is a misconception that students who are enrolled in Fine Arts have to choose between Athletics and Music. The Athletics and Fine Arts Departments work side-by-side to allow our students to participate and compete for both departments. Conflicts sometimes happen, but we work them out. Good communication between students, parents, coaches, and teachers is important in fostering a positive balance between your passions.



Cello sectionals with guest clinicians!

Do I bring my cello or bass back and forth to school? Like your junior high program, students may use a Katy ISD cello or bass for a fee of \$100 per instrument per year. This fee is paid at the beginning of the school year. Violinists and violists will transport their instruments back and forth, but have orchestra lockers to store these in. Seven Lakes does not provide violas or violins for school use.

What other commitments must I make in order to be a member?

After-school sectionals are required

of students enrolled in the upper three ensembles. Additionally, Monday night rehearsals (5:30 to 7:30p) each week are mandatory to prepare for certain concerts during the school year. Not all students will attend Monday night rehearsals during the entire school year. Additionally, to prepare for upcoming concerts or performances, students may need to attend an additional Dress Rehearsal or Clinic.

What expenses are incurred with membership in the Orchestras? Students, at the beginning of the year, pay an Activity Fee, a Uniform Maintenance Fee, and purchase a garment bag. As part of the performance uniforms, students provide their own tuxedo shirt, black socks and black dress shoes (boys); and black hosiery and black dress shoes (girls). Additionally, students purchase the informal concert uniform, which consists of the orchestra t-shirt. Students choosing to participate in our social events pay for their admission and food costs. The spring trip at the end of the year is also an additional expense.

Do I have to buy a tuxedo or formal gown for the concerts? No. Katy ISD issues a formal uniform to every enrolled student; however, there is a Maintenance/Dry Cleaning Fee that must be paid. Also, be aware that we have different uniforms according to the different performances that we have. Although most of our performances require the formal uniform, periodically, we will wear our informal uniform (purchased orchestra shirts and jeans) at informal settings.

What contests and competitions are available to me?

All students are encouraged to audition for a membership in the Region 23 Orchestras in the Fall term. Additionally, students may choose to keep working toward the highest level of orchestra: TMEA's All-State. The Spring semester is highlighted by the annual UIL Solo and Ensemble Contest. At the highest level, students may compete at UT-Austin's Texas State Solo and Ensemble Contest (TSSEC) in May. Concerto competitions



2017 Region Orchestra Members



Working hard to fundraise at our annual Mega Car Wash!

sponsored by local civic organizations and youth orchestras are highly encouraged. Of course, many of our orchestras also compete in UIL Concert and Sight-Reading contest.

Working hard and performing well can earn you points toward your letter jacket, a very prestigious honor! It's cool to be seen around school in your letter jacket! *Did you know that the very first Seven Lakes HS letter jackets were earned by Orchestra students?*

What about social events? Do you have them?

Our Student Officers select, plan, and coordinate all social aspects of the orchestra. This year, they planned our "Movie Night," Ice Skating Winter Social, our Informal and Formal Banquets, outings at Main Event, and more. Periodically, we also host social events in conjunction with rehearsals or performances. Our biggest social event is our Spring trip, which combines the fun of a mini-vacation with a performance at an out-of-town major venue. Our ensembles have performed at the Meyerson Symphony Center and Majestic Theater in Dallas, Chicago's Symphony Hall, Judson Performing Arts Center, and Tulane University. In 2012, the Symphony Orchestra was the featured performer for Disney World!



Fun and games at our social events!

I was a Student Officer at my middle school and would like to be an officer again. Can I do that? The office of President is restricted to upperclassmen, but anyone can run for the other offices. We traditionally vote for officers in the spring, but the Freshman Representative is voted on in the Fall semester.



Performances all over the US!

How can my parents be involved in the Orchestra program? The Seven Lakes Orchestra Parents Association (SLOPA) is always looking for energetic parents that are excited about helping out the Director and the student membership of the Seven Lakes Orchestras. We have meetings about once a month and ask for parents to contribute their time a various ways such as chaperoning events, contributing baked goods or snacks for receptions, hosting contests, and helping fundraise for various items. We hope that your parents will attend all of your concerts and performances, and will lend a helping hand.

What do you do for Fundraising? Every Fall, the orchestra sponsors a huge community-wide car wash. In the Spring semester, our booster club sponsors a violin art raffle called “Music to the Eyes.” Additionally, the SLOPA manages smaller fundraisers throughout the school year, like car washes. Profits from the fundraisers go toward our Spring trip and other expenditures.

What benefits are enjoyed by being a member of the Orchestra? Wow! The best question of all! Members of the Orchestra reap many benefits. We all understand about improvement as a musician. We all know that focused practice and performing more difficult music is the key to successful music-making, but there are so many more wonderful things about high school orchestra!

Curriculum-wise, we explore music theory, music history, and music appreciation. We investigate the math, science, history, and culture surrounding music.

Orchestra has real-world applications in character traits such as: teamwork, discipline, dedication, commitment, pride, and integrity.

Individual honors such as Region, Area, and State Orchestra membership, medals at UIL Solo and Ensemble, and of course, the Seven Lakes letter jacket, are incentives for being a member of this elite organization! Colleges look for well-rounded students, especially those that have made a 7-year commitment to an organization.

Socially, the orchestra family is a tight-knit group of friends who support each other, laugh while learning, and love making music together. We are a growing organization with lots of potential, tenacity, and talent. Hard work and passion for our art are the backbone of our organization. It is evident that all of our orchestra students love to perform, and that orchestra is a priority in our lives. In essence, we love to play, and it shows.

If you have additional questions about the Seven Lakes Orchestras, please feel free to contact the Director, Desiree Overree, through any of the contact methods below. Visit our website and navigate around to find out more about our group. We’d love to hear from you!

