



Seven Lakes High School Orchestras

January 23, 2020

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 program at Seven Lakes is all about.

We have been very blessed at Seven Lakes High School. In our 16th year of existence, the orchestras have earned many accolades, and have presented many outstanding performances. Our ensembles have won numerous "Sweepstakes" trophies at various UIL and festival contests. Our orchestras consistently rank in the top 10 orchestras among all high school orchestra programs in Texas. In 2016 and 2020, the Symphony Orchestra was crowned State Champions; they performed in front of over 3000 music educators at TMEA Convention. Our Pit Orchestra have done an outstanding job for our musicals, "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown!", "Once Upon a Mattress," "Guys and Dolls," "The Music Man," "Big Fish," and "Beauty and the Beast." For their hard work, they have been nominated for Best Orchestra at every "Tommy Tune" awards, the high school equivalent of the Oscars. The Pit Orchestra actually won the prestigious "Best Orchestra" Award for both "Once Upon a Mattress" and "Beauty and the Beast!"

Each year, we bring in guest clinicians from all over the world. Jeffrey Grogan (Oklahoma City University), Franz Krager (University of Houston), and Brian Worsdale (French Woods Festival of Fine Arts) rave about our ensembles. Our students have received masterclasses from world-class musicians from the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields and from many colleges and universities all over the United States. Our students have had the opportunity to perform and premiere living composer works by Lowell Liebermann, Kelsey Lange, Todd Frazier, Michael Markowski, and John Mackey. One of our biggest concerts was when we performed with European pop superstar, Alex Rybak.

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 so many consecutive Sweepstakes trophies 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, Itzhak Perlman, 2Cellos, and the Houston Symphony! Students enjoy social events like Movie Night, the O-Mazing Race, 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,

Desiree Overree, Director of Orchestras

Sean Carlton, Assistant Director of Orchestras

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 currently 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, Philharmonia 7, 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 balance between performance and the more academic curriculum of music makes each student a well-rounded musician.

Hey, future SLORK students! This is April Feng and Rosemarie Le, Co-Presidents of the Seven Lakes Orchestras! We know 2020 has been a rough year for everyone, but for the Seven Lakes Orchestras, it has been a great opportunity for us to adapt and change things up!

When the coronavirus hit us last year, orchestra was, like every other class, forced to take things completely online. To be honest, the second semester last year had been going great for us. Not only did we have an amazing spring trip to Orlando Disney World, but we had also just gotten off the high of winning and getting to perform at the TMEA San Antonio convention with the full orchestra. We got to play some iconic repertoire including Shostakovich and more. Alongside playing, we got to make amazing memories like attempting to play expensive french horns in the exhibit hall and riding the Rip Ride Rockit at Universal. It was only once we switched to online that we realized how important orchestra truly was, both as a second family and a place to destress. Although we collectively suffered through plenty of late Monday night two-hour-long rehearsals, they were still fond memories to look back on.

At the beginning of this school year, we played on Zoom but were also lucky enough to rehearse synchronously on Jamulus. Our amazing officer team and directors were also able to host the first-ever SLORK Drive-In concert! It was a totally new (but welcome) experience. We also tried out various Zoom socials such as an online escape room, a virtual Olympics, etc. Despite this online format, we, upperclassmen, were still able to connect with the freshmen this year through our Big/Little system. Unlike in years past where we were able to just hang out with friends in the orchestra room before and after school, we weren't able to have those types of interactions this year. Thus, with the Big/Little system, we paired upperclassmen with freshmen to foster those kinds of relationships.

When we were freshmen, we, just like you, were extremely intimidated by all that high school entailed plus the tall (mostly the guys), cold-looking upperclassmen. What we found instead was a warm, welcoming, wacky family that supported us throughout high school and provided us with a cozy safe space to destress in.

As Co-Presidents, we hope to extend this tradition to you, our incoming freshmen class! We hope that you will feel the same way about orchestra as we have these past years. Welcome to the Seven Lakes Orchestras!

Looking forward to meeting you,
Rosemarie Le, Class of 2021
April Feng, Class of 2022

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

Students are assigned to orchestras according to ability, attitude, instrumentation, and director's recommendation. 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, scales, and sight-reading (for pianists only). This audition takes place in March for the following year. Audition information will be distributed to all interested students around 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. UIL rules have changed and all students may participate in UIL Concert and Sight-Reading.



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 top band and string players combine to perform symphonic literature in each semester. We have already had several performances this school year, and were blessed to win our 14th consecutive "Sweepstakes" trophy at the annual UIL Concert and Sight-reading Contest! In 2016 and for 2020, the Symphony ranked #1 in the state. There is no additional class to register for because this orchestra meets on Monday nights from 5:30 to 7:30p.

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**. Most recently, the department staged "Beauty and the Beast" and was nominated for 11 Tommy Tune Awards, including "Best Orchestra," which they won! The Pit Orchestra is comprised of selected 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.

What is the Musical and how can I participate?



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 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.

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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. Seven Lakes has 11 Orchestra All-Staters this year, and at one point in time, as many as 15! The Spring semester is highlighted by the annual UIL Solo and Ensemble Contest. At the highest level, students may compete at UT-Austin's TSSEC or Katy ISD's KYAC in May. Concerto competitions sponsored by local civic organizations and youth orchestras are highly encouraged.





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?*

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 2020, we're going to Disney World!

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," socials at Altitude and Main Event, our Informal and Formal Banquets, 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



Our Student Leadership Team!

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.

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 in 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? In the past, the orchestra sponsors a huge community-wide Mega Car Wash. In the spring semester, our booster club sponsors a violin art raffle called "Music to the Eyes." Profits from the fundraisers go toward our spring trip and other expenditures.



TMEA Trip



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 and universities are seeking out students that have been enrolled in long-term fine arts such as Band, Choir, and Orchestra. Imagine being dedicated to an organization for not 4, but 7 years!! On top of that, they understand and believe in the dedication, commitment, and habits it takes for students to learn an instrument (well) takes. They are seeking out students that have excelled in fine arts. ***We not only place students in the top 10 of Seven Lakes HS graduates EVERY year, but almost all of our seniors graduate in the top 15%.***



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 an established organization with lots of 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!

Auditions materials will be sent at a later date.

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