

**LANIER MIDDLE SCHOOL
ORCHESTRA HANDBOOK
2012-2013**



ORCHESTRA DIRECTOR

LAURETTE MCDONALD

LMCDONA3@HOUSTONISD.ORG

713-942-1900 x474

WWW.LANIERORCHESTRA.ORG

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Beginning Orchestra:

This orchestra is divided into two class periods, and consists of students with no past experience on a stringed instrument. The main emphasis of this class is basic posture and position, tone production, rhythm, note reading, and ear training. Beginning students are required to participate in all scheduled rehearsals and concerts. Because this orchestra is divided into two class periods, there may be an occasional after school rehearsal to prepare for concerts.

Concert Orchestra:

This orchestra is divided into two class periods, and consists of students with at least one year of experience. The main emphasis of this class is note reading, rhythms, posture, and ensemble technique. Concert Orchestra students are required to participate in all scheduled rehearsals and concerts. Because this orchestra is divided into two class periods, there may be an occasional after school rehearsal to prepare for concerts.

Philharmonic Orchestra:

This orchestra consists of students with at least one year of prior playing experience. The main emphasis of this class is complex rhythms, vibrato, and shifting. Students with private teachers are encouraged to audition for the region orchestra and participate in the solo and ensemble contest. Students in this orchestra participate in the annual UIL contest.

Sinfonia:

This orchestra consists of students with at least one year of prior playing experience who have auditioned and been selected. Students will continue to develop more advanced techniques such as vibrato, shifting, extensions, and musicianship. Students in this orchestra participate in the annual UIL contest. 7th and 8th grade students are required to audition for the region orchestra (optional for 6th graders). Students with private teachers can participate in the solo and ensemble contest. Students in this orchestra are also required to participate in Lanier Symphony Orchestra events (combined orchestra and band). This orchestra requires an increased level of commitment from all students.

Participation Requirements for Philharmonic and Sinfonia:

1. Concerts
2. Morning or After School Sectionals, as needed.
3. After School Rehearsals, as needed
4. Pre-UIL Concert/Clinic
5. UIL Contest

ATTENDANCE POLICY

By enrolling in orchestra, students and their parents are committing to attending all required events during the year. Certain types of absences can be made up. Each case will be considered individually and privately according to its circumstances. All decision's are made at the director's discretion and are final.

Students may make up an **EXCUSED** absence if:

1. The absence is due to the student's own illness or a death in the family.
2. The absence is due to a conflict with another Lanier related event. Please notify Ms. McDonald two weeks prior to the event so she can work things out with the other teacher involved.
3. The absence is due to a conflict with a religious holiday.

Students are considered **UNEXCUSED** if the absence is because of a "non-Lanier" event, doctor appointments, not having a ride, simply forgetting about the event, or not notifying Ms. McDonald in a timely fashion. Please PLAN AHEAD to avoid these sorts of conflicts. UNEXCUSED ABSENCES RECEIVE A GRADE OF ZERO FOR THE EVENT.

Make-up Tapes – Rehearsals, Clinics, and Concerts – EXCUSED absences only!

Students will receive full credit for the grade if they do a make-up recording. Ms. McDonald must assign the music that they practice. The recording should be one hour in length and is due at least three days prior to the end of the nine weeks. If the absence was excused and the student fails to turn in a recording, or the absence was unexcused, a grade of "zero" will be recorded for the event.

REQUIRED SUPPLIES

All Students:

1. Shoulder Rest (violins and violas only) - Kun brand or similar
2. Rock Stop (cellos and basses only)
3. Black 3-Ring Binder – 1” Rings
4. Pencils and Pencil Pouch for Binder
5. Wire Music Stand
6. Cleaning Cloth
7. Rosin

Beginners/Concert Only:
Orchestra Expressions Book 1

**Please make sure that all items are marked the student's name.
All instrument cases need to have instrument tags with student information!**

Local Instrument Shops

Amati Violin Shop
2315 University Blvd
Houston, TX 77005
www.amativiolinshop.com
713-666-6461

Lisle Violin Shop
2450 Bissonnet
Houston, TX 77005
www.lisleviolinshop.com
713-526-4005

Gold Violin Shop
7010 Mapleridge
Houston, TX 77081
713-729-2231

PERFORMANCE DRESS

Beginners/Concert Orchestra:

Uniform Khaki Pants or Skirt, Black Lanier Polo, and dress shoes. NO SHORTS. All shirts must be tucked in.

Philharmonic and Sinfonia:

Ladies: Mandisa style dress, black in color.

Available from: www.stageaccents.com (once at the website, search for “mandisa”)

This dress comes in girls and ladies sizes. Please follow the sizing chart on the website.

*You will also need black DRESS shoes. No sandals/flip-flops.

Gentlemen: Black dress shirt with long sleeves.

Black dress pants, or adjustable tuxedo pants.

Black DRESS shoes and LONG BLACK SOCKS.

In most cases, you will have to hem the dresses. Please make sure you do this with a temporary hem so that you may take it out as your child grows. **The first formal concert will be the Winter Concert in December. Please make sure you have your uniforms ordered by October 31.**

Students also need to own a Lanier Orchestra T-Shirt. Shirts can be purchased for \$10 and will be used for informal events/trips.

CALCULATION OF GRADES

PERFORMANCES (50%): playing exams, sectionals, rehearsals, concerts, clinics, and contests. Playing exams will be based on posture, technique, correct fingerings, bowings, musicality, tone and intonation. Some playing exams will be scored using the SmartMusic assessment program. Concert grades are based on musicianship and appropriate uniforms.

SKILLS (25%): scale tests, tuning tests, written exams, binder checks, and practice logs. Binders must have all music with correct markings given from rehearsals. Some tests will be scored using the SmartMusic assessment program. Only Beginning and Concert Orchestras are responsible for practice logs (more information will be received in class).

PARTICIPATION (25%): class contribution, being on time, having materials and instrument, worksheets, and stage clean-up.

CHAIR PLACEMENTS:

Chair placements for concerts will be done using a cumulative method. One week prior to each concert, the points from each student's playing exams will be tabulated. The student with the highest number of points will be first chair; the student with the second highest number of points will be second chair, etc. Any solo positions will be by audition only. Ms. McDonald reserves the right to select chairs for the UIL contest and spring trips.

ELIGIBILITY

To participate in UIL events, contests, and trips, you must be eligible. In other words, you need to be passing all of your classes! Grades are checked every three weeks. If you are passing all classes on your report card, you don't need to worry about your progress report grades. However, if you are failing at least one class on a report card, you must be passing ALL classes on your next progress report. You have two chances to "regain" eligibility with each progress report. You will be provided with a list of all eligibility grade check dates. For more information or clarification, contact Ms. McDonald.

EXTRA CREDIT

You will receive 5 points extra credit on a performance grade (major grade) for each professional event you attend throughout the school year. Extra credit will not be factored into your chair placement score.

To get credit:

- Write a short report about things you observed at the performance. Your report can include musical observations, interpretations, reactions to the music, communication between players, conductor styles, etc. The report does not need to be long – just concise and expressive. Make sure you put your name on the report.
- Attach a ticket stub or concert program to the report, signed by a parent.

Concerts must be "professional" in nature and involve at least one string player (youth orchestras and K-12 school orchestras do **not** count). Houston Symphony, Houston Ballet, Houston Grand Opera, TUTS, Shepherd School Symphony, Moores School Symphony, Mercury Baroque, Houston Chamber Orchestra, River Oaks Chamber Orchestra are pre-approved. Contact Ms. McDonald for approval of other events.

PROCEDURES & EXPECTATIONS

Follow these rules when you are in orchestra class:

1. Be in your seat with your instrument and supplies when the tardy bell rings.
2. No talking while the director is on the podium.
3. If you have a question, raise your hand.
4. Stay in your seat unless you have permission to get out of it.
5. No food, drinks, or gum at any time.

When you enter the orchestra room:

1. Take your instrument to your chair and unpack; rosin your bow if necessary.
2. Tune your instrument.
3. Individually practice and wait for the signal that class is starting.

COMMUNICATION

WWW.LANIERORCHESTRA.ORG

The orchestra website will keep you up to date on all orchestra related events. You can find the calendar there. It will be updated as needed. The website has a special "Members Area" that contains handouts and recordings.

We will also continue to use Charms Office Assistant for your account information, finances, practice logs, and student recordings. If you need to update your account information or check financial records, please do the following:

1. Go to www.charmsoffice.com
2. Type in 'LanierMSOrch' in the student/parent login.
3. Type in your child's student ID for the password.

PRIVATE LESSONS

Private lessons are not required, but strongly encouraged. A private instructor can individualize instruction for your child, allowing them to progress at a faster rate, and giving special attention to solos and region audition music. There are many private instructors in the Houston area. For a complete list, please locate the handout entitled "Private Lesson Teachers" in the "Members Area" of our website. Email Ms. McDonald if you need a recommendation.

FUNDRAISING

In order for the orchestra to participate in various activities, funds are required for each student. It is the orchestra's policy that students participate in some manner in the fundraisers to do their fair share.

Fundraisers for the orchestra account – **Required Fundraising Fee = \$50 per student**

These fundraisers are used to provide funds to purchase orchestra department enhancements such as equipment maintenance and purchases, UIL/TMEA expenses, transportation costs, reception expenses, clinicians, off-campus activities, minor trip expenses, general supplies, contest fees, and financial assistance. The first \$50 each student raises from fundraising will be applied to this fee. Students/Parents that choose not to participate in the orchestra fundraisers may donate instead.

Fundraisers for individual accounts will give you the opportunity to raise money towards your spring trip account. This will help students and parents offset the costs of the spring trip(s).