

VALLEY ORCHESTRA



A Guidebook for Students and Families of the Valley High School and Valley Southwoods Orchestras

More complete information can be found by accessing this information through the Valley High School or Valley Southwoods web pages.

The Valley Orchestra Program

The Valley Orchestra Program consists of three string orchestras: a freshman string orchestra, a high school string orchestra, and the chamber orchestra. Adding members of the Valley Southwoods and Valley High School band departments create symphonic orchestras each year. Additionally, students participate in many small ensembles throughout the year performing as string quartets and trios at various community functions. Co-curricular ensembles change every year and have included traditional fiddle groups, an electric string ensemble, Mariachi groups and Chinese Folk Instrument ensembles. The orchestra has collaborated with the Valley Vocal music program to produce four Masterwork concerts and fully staged productions of several operas including Mozart's *The Magic Flute* in 1997 and two one act operas in 1999: Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* and Mascagni's *Cavallaria Rusticana*. Collaborations with the School of Classical Ballet and Dance resulted in ballet productions of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* (2002), Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* (2003), and a contemporary dance production in 2004. Collaborations with the Valley Drama department have included productions of *Guys and Dolls* (2004), *West Side Story* (2008), *Footloose – The Musical* (2011) and *Wizard of Oz* (2015). In 2016, the orchestra also joined with The Opera Project DM for a production of Puccini's opera *Suor Angelica* and with the folk-rock band The Well Pennies. We also featured guest performers from the University of Iowa.

The Valley Orchestras have been very active in commissioning new works for string orchestra from Iowa composers (Tracey Rush, Joshua Reznicow, and Michael Kimber) and from composers across the country (Russell Scarbrough, Paul W. Whear, and Ola Gjello). We also enjoy supporting our graduates who are active in composing and enjoyed working with Travis Patton on his piece *Meadow View* in 2015.

The Valley Orchestra program has consistently received superior ratings at state contests and has participated in several music festivals including Music of the Rockies in Denver in 1996, the Banff International Festival of High School Orchestras in 1997 and the Heritage Music Festival in St. Louis in 2001. The orchestra also represented the state of Iowa and performed four concerts in Germany and Austria as part of Music Celebrations International Austria 2000 festival. The orchestra performed at the Heritage Festival of Gold in Chicago in 2002 and traveled to Italy in June of 2004 to participate in the Music Celebrations International Festival of Music. In 2006, the Valley/Valley Southwoods orchestra participated in the Winter Park Ski-Music Festival, earning superior ratings. The Valley String Orchestra was selected as the 2006 4A Honor Orchestra for the Iowa String Teachers' Convention. The VHS Orchestra also participated in the New York Band and Orchestra Festival, hosted by World Projects, and performed on the stage at Carnegie Hall in June 2007. In the spring of 2009, the orchestra traveled to France with the Valley choir and performed four concerts in Paris and Normandy. 2011 found the orchestra in Chicago again, earning a Gold rating at the Heritage Festival. A very successful trip to England and Wales occurred in March of 2013 and the orchestra again received a Gold rating at a Heritage festival performance in Chicago in April 2014. June of 2015 found the orchestra back in New York City for another performance at Carnegie Hall.

Calendar of Events 2016-2017

VALLEY SOUTHWOODS EVENTS

August 22	Uniform Fitting at Valley High School Orchestra Room TIME TBA
October 6	FALL CONCERT at Valley Performing Arts Center 7:30 p.m.
October 22	All State Orchestra Auditions – all day at Indianola HS
November 17-19	All State Music Festival in Ames
December 1	WINTER CONCERT #1 at Valley Performing Arts Center 7:30 p.m.
March 2	WINTER CONCERT #2 at Valley Performing Arts Center 7:30 p.m.
April 8	STATE Solo/Ensemble Contest – Location TBD
May 18	SPRING CONCERT/AWARDS BANQUET 6:30 p.m.
May 23	VSW Music Department CONCERT at Valley Performing Arts Center 7:00 p.m.

VALLEY STRING ORCHESTRA EVENTS

August 22	Uniform Fitting at Valley High School Orchestra Room TIME TBA
October 6	FALL CONCERT at Valley Performing Arts Center 7:30 p.m.
October 22	All State Orchestra Auditions – all day at Indianola HS
November 17-19	All State Music Festival in Ames
December 1	WINTER CONCERT #1 at Valley Performing Arts Center 7:30 p.m.
March 2	WINTER CONCERT #2 at Valley Performing Arts Center 7:30 p.m.
April 8	STATE Solo/Ensemble Contest – Location TBD
May 18	SPRING CONCERT/AWARDS BANQUET 6:30 p.m.

VALLEY CHAMBER ORCHESTRA EVENTS

August 22	Uniform Fitting at Valley High School Orchestra Room TIME TBA
October 6	FALL CONCERT at Valley Performing Arts Center 7:30 p.m.
October 22	All State Orchestra Auditions – all day at Indianola HS
November 17-19	All State Music Festival in Ames
December 1	WINTER CONCERT #1 at Valley Performing Arts Center 7:30 p.m.
December 2-20	Chamber Groups perform at area Retirement Communities/Civic events
January 16-20	The Opera Project Des Moines Rehearsals Times TBA
January 21	The Opera Project Des Moines Performance 8:00 p.m.
January 22	The Opera Project Des Moines Performance 3:00 p.m.
March 2	WINTER CONCERT #2 at Valley Performing Arts Center 7:30 p.m.
April 8	STATE Solo/Ensemble Contest – Location TBD
May 18	SPRING CONCERT/AWARDS BANQUET 6:30 p.m.

**VALLEY ORCHESTRA GUILD MEETINGS – All Meetings at Valley High School
Orchestra Room**

September 19 – 7:00 p.m.
October 17 – 6:00 p.m.
November 21 – 7:00 p.m.
December 19 – 7:00 p.m.
January 16 – 7:00 p.m.
February 20 – 7:00 p.m.
March 20 – 7:00 p.m.
April 17 – 7:00 p.m.
May 15 – 7:00 p.m.

Please note that the dates and times of events vary occasionally due to conflicts within our district. We may also add events as opportunities arise for our students to participate in activities that enrich their learning and understanding of music.



GENERAL INFORMATION

CONCERT DRESS

Girls are required to wear a long sleeve black dress purchased or rented from the Valley Orchestra Guild. Information regarding the purchase or rental of dresses is given to all eighth grade girls in the spring before entering VSW. Other girls new to the program will get specific information from Mr. Peters or Ms. Senger in the first weeks of the school year. Additionally, all girls should wear black hose and *dress black shoes*. **IMPORTANT – ANY GARMENT WORN UNDER THE DRESS MUST BE COMPLETELY COVERED BY THE DRESS.....NO UNDERSHIRTS SHOWING.**

Boys will wear black tuxedos rented from the Valley Orchestra Guild, *black socks and dress black shoes*. Boys are responsible for obtaining their own white tuxedo shirt. Ties and cummerbunds will be provided with the rental tuxedo. **RENTAL FEES FOR TUXEDOS ARE \$50 FOR THE YEAR (THIS INCLUDES CLEANING) DRESS RENTAL FEE IS \$40. FEE IS DUE AT TIME OF FITTING AND NO LATER THAN SEPTEMBER 15. CHECK SHOULD BE PAYABLE TO THE VALLEY ORCHESTRA GUILD**

INSTRUMENT RENTAL

The school district has several violas, cellos and basses available for rent. The instrument rental fee is \$65/YEAR. Forms will be sent home with the students at the end of the first week of classes. **The rental fees need to be paid before the end of the second week of classes if they were not paid at registration.** Students renting instruments from the school are responsible for ALL maintenance during the rental period, including replacing any broken strings. Due to availability, cello students may only rent one instrument. If a second instrument is desired for home practice to avoid transporting the instrument, you will need to rent a second instrument from a local music dealer. NOT HAVING AN INSTRUMENT AT HOME IS NO EXCUSE FOR NOT BEING ABLE TO PRACTICE!

INSTRUMENT STORAGE

Lockers are available in the orchestra room to store instruments during the school day. Combination locks will be provided at no charge. It is expected that ALL instruments will be secured in a locker when not in use. Instruments left out in the orchestra room will be taken to lost and found. **ALL SCHOOL OWNED INSTRUMENTS ARE TO BE LOCKED IN LOCKERS WHEN NOT IN USE. THE PRIVILEGE OF USING A SCHOOL OWNED INSTRUMENT WILL BE LOST IF THE INSTRUMENT IS NOT SECURED. ANY RENTAL FEES PAID FOR SUCH INSTRUMENTS WILL NOT BE REFUNDED.**

SCHOOL POLICIES FOR ORCHESTRA ACTIVITIES

All Valley High School/Valley Southwoods rules are in effect at all times during orchestra activities. These policies should be reviewed in the Student Handbook.

Valley High School Orchestra

Seating Policy

Seating within the string sections will be based on auditions and/or playing tests as announced throughout the school year. The director will place violinists in sections that will remain in place for the concert cycle. The decision of the director regarding all seating within the orchestra is final.

Parents and students need to understand that seating is NOT a reflection of the student's strengths and it is NOT a hierarchy of musicians. The goal in a high school orchestra program is to learn to work together to create beautiful music. Many factors are considered when placing students in sections or seating order. The grade for the course is the best indicator of whether or not your child is performing at a high level.

Note that the above policy is for Valley High School only. Valley Southwoods will use a rotating system for all seating.

Principal Chairs

Auditions and interviews for principal chairs will take place at the beginning of each quarter. The successful principal player will demonstrate the following characteristics:

1. Consistently strives for excellence in all performance activities.
2. Is always prepared for rehearsals, including advance preparations and all materials.
3. Demonstrates responsible behaviors appropriate for a section principal (including setting up and being ready to play before the rehearsal begins).
4. Shows a willingness to assist all members of the section in learning parts, bowings, fingerings, etc.

Communication with Directors

Students and parents are encouraged to communicate with the directors at all times. Phone calls, emails, and meetings to discuss any concerns or successes are welcome. Feel free to contact the directors at the following numbers/email addresses:

Phil Peters	633-4219	petersp@wdmcs.org
Michele Senger	633-4510	sengerm@wdmcs.org

In general, ALL communication with students regarding assignments, concerts and due dates will take place through Google Classroom using their student email addresses. Students should get in the habit of checking your school email accounts regularly. Communications to parents/guardians regarding concerts, events, and conferences will be through email messages sent through Infinite Campus or through phone calls.

The Valley Orchestra Guild

The Valley Orchestra Guild is the parent support group for the 4-12 West Des Moines Orchestra program. This group supports events including concerts, master classes, skate parties, trips, instrument purchases and rentals, summer camp scholarships, and commissioning new works for string orchestra at the elementary and high school levels. Additionally, the VOG provides several scholarships for high school students each year. Scholarship information and application forms are available online. Please visit our website regularly for the most up-to-date information:

<http://bit.ly/valleyorchestra>

PLEASE VISIT THE ONLINE SITE FOR MORE INFORMATION AS WELL AS FORMS
FOR SCHOLARSHIPS, FUNDRAISERS, AND MORE.

Educational Non-Discrimination Statement

The West Des Moines Community School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, disability, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy, please contact the district's Equity Coordinator Dr. Carol Seid, Associate Superintendent of Human Resources, 3550 Mills Civic Parkway, West Des Moines, IA 50265; Phone: 515-633-5037;E-mail:seidc@wdmcs.org.

ORCHESTRA AWARDS

Awards for participation in orchestra and music activities are presented annually at the Spring Banquet. Students are also recognized for service above and beyond the call of duty to the orchestra. The National School Orchestra Award is presented to an outstanding senior for exceptional service, scholarship, and dedication to the orchestra. Additionally, several scholarships are available for students in all grades from 9-12 ranging from \$250-\$500. These scholarships are competitive and will be announced at our December and May concerts.

LETTERING IN ORCHESTRA

The purpose of lettering in orchestra is to recognize the contributions and extra work that many of our students complete during the school year. Orchestra letters are awarded each spring. To receive a letter, students must earn 1200 points using the point summary sheet as a guide. Students that earn 1600 or more points are eligible for a special service award. An orchestra point summary sheet is included as a guide for the school year. The actual lettering report form will be sent to students using Google Classroom and must be submitted electronically by May 1. See the next two pages for a sample lettering report sheet.

SAMPLE ORCHESTRA LETTER POINT SHEET

Name _____

Grade _____

Date _____

Identify the items you have participated in and enter the corresponding points in the column on the right. After completing the sheet, total your points for the year and turn in to the orchestra office before May 1.

Orchestra Participation:	-1 st year participant	100	_____
	-2 nd year participant	150	_____
	-3 rd year participant	200	_____
	-4 th year participant	250	_____
Iowa All-State Orchestra Member		200	_____
Audition for All-State Orchestra		150	_____
Summer Music Camp Participant		200	_____
District Solo Contest:			
	-I Rating	150	_____
	-II Rating	100	_____
	-III Rating	75	_____
District Ensemble Contest:			
	-I Rating	100	_____
	-II Rating	75	_____
	-III Rating	50	_____
State Solo/Ensemble Contest Participant		100	_____
State Large Group Contest Participant		50	_____
DMYSO Participant		100	_____
Honor Orchestra Participant (ISU, Dorian, etc)		100	_____
Extra-Curricular Ensemble Participant (includes Electric, String Quartets, Fiddle Groups, MUST meet on a regular basis)		100	_____
'A' Grade (first semester only)		50	_____
Private Lessons (Per semester)		200	_____
SUBTOTAL (transfer to bottom of next page) _____			

SAMPLE ORCHESTRA POINT SUMMARY (PAGE 2)
EXTRA ACTIVITIES

(SUBTOTALS FROM THIS PAGE MUST BE TRANSFERRED TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS PAGE)

COMMUNITY/CIVIC PERFORMANCES

(LIST NON-SCHOOL PERFORMANCES ONLY: 25 POINTS EACH, rehearsals do not count)

SUBTOTAL (ADD AT BOTTOM OF PAGE) _____

ORCHESTRA OR VOG SERVICE WORK

(List activities and time involved, directors will assign points)

EXTRA AM/PM REHEARSALS

(This does NOT include ensembles that you are claiming points for on the first page.
Extra rehearsals are 25 points each.)

SUBTOTAL (ADD AT BOTTOM OF PAGE) _____

****SUBTOTAL FROM PAGE ONE** _____
COMMUNITY/CIVIC PERFORMANCES SUBTOTAL _____
SERVICE WORK SUBTOTAL _____
EXTRA AM/PM REHEARSALS SUBTOTAL _____
GRAND TOTAL _____
1200 POINTS = ORCHESTRA LETTER
1600 POINTS = LETTER AND AWARD

NOTE: THIS FORM WILL BE COMPLETED ONLINE FOR 2016-17

MUSIC DEPARTMENT

Out of School Performance Practices

Performing groups are both in class and out-of-class time in nature. They are considered co-curricular because the outcomes of class instruction are used in public demonstrations for an audience. The groups most frequently used in such a dual role are band, orchestra and vocal groups. The vitality and value of these classes are affected through preparation as a group for public performances at out-of-class times. The student cannot be a satisfactory member of the organization if his/her only participation is that part carried on in the classroom during school time. Satisfactory membership must also include the out-of-class time participation.

It is essential that students who enroll in such classes understand that the conditions for satisfactory grades include out-of-class performances. A schedule of performances for the semester will be prepared at the beginning of each semester and sent home to parents/guardians for their information. Written agreement of the out-of-class schedule from both parents/guardians and students is desirable. Approved absences will be honored when the director is informed before the performance. The principal, following consultation with the director, will make decisions concerning absenteeism beyond this point.

If a student is absent, arrangements to make up the absence should be discussed with the director. Students are encouraged to make up the work in advance if possible. Parents are asked to contact the director when their student will be absent from a performance. In the event a conflict should arise between activities within the school, an arrangement agreeable to all parties will be worked out in consultation with the student, the activity sponsors involved, the principal, and the parents.

All performing groups encourage parent/student communication with the respective directors. Parental participation in the junior and senior high schools enhance the performance program. The directors will be continually informing administrators, students and parents of upcoming events, performances and festivals that will take place during the year. The structure and implementation of these out-of-school performance practices in the music disciplines should be consistent within each building and throughout the district.

Thank you for reviewing the information presented. The communication and performance expectations are important to your child's development in the music program. Please return the following form to your music teacher.

We have received and reviewed the information and understand the additional commitment to out-of-school performances and presentations.

Student _____

Parent _____

Date _____

NOTE: THIS FORM WILL BE COMPLETED ONLINE FOR 2016-17.

VHS Handbook Acknowledgment and Instrument Information

Please **return this form** to your director and **have all supplies** by **September 1, 2016**.

Please Print:

Name as you would like it on concert programs _____

Nickname or name you wish to be called in class _____

Parents' or Guardians' names _____

Home Phone Number _____ Work Phone Number _____

Parent Email address (please print clearly!) _____

Student Email address (please print clearly!) _____

Birth Date _____

Instrument _____

Make/ Model _____ Serial Number _____

Private Teacher's Name (if applicable) _____

Please list any medical concerns for rehearsals, concerts, field trips, etc.

I have read and understand the Valley and Valley Southwoods Orchestra Handbook. I also understand that Orchestra is a class that requires participation in all rehearsals and concerts. Excessive tardiness or absence from rehearsals may be cause to prohibit a student from performing in concerts.

Parent's signature

Student's Signature

Date

Date