

**Lower School Orchestra Program**  
**St. Margaret' s Episcopal School**  
**Director: Mr. Gene Wie**  
**2009-2010**

Welcome to the Introductory component of our Orchestra Program.

This course is a two-year sequence for 4th and 5th grade that offers instrumental and ensemble training. Students are taught the basics of playing a stringed instrument (violin, viola, cello, or bass), learn skills for playing together in a string ensemble, and develop an understanding of the symbols and terminology of music. In addition to their two mandatory concert performances, there are opportunities available more advanced students (including those with prior string experience) to play more often.

Over the course of the year, music selections from a wide range of genres and styles are used to teach new notes and fingerings, establish rhythms, and introduce a variety of styles. More specifically, we cover:

- Learning/Reinforcing music fundamentals: Notes and Rhythms
- What is Musicianship? Learning about the “art form.”
- Basic Instrumental Technique
- Good habits to keep your instrument (and you) working well!
- Introduction to Ensemble (Group) Playing
- Why fifteen minutes a day of practice makes a huge difference!

While our instruction here at SMES aims to be as thorough as possible, we are only able to cover so much material in the eighty or so minutes of class meeting time we have each week. All music students can benefit greatly from the experience of private instruction outside of school, both to help reinforce concepts learned in class and to progress in playing ability at a greater rate. Private lessons also help to establish a regular schedule of daily practice. We will be happy to provide a list of references to established teachers in the local area.

**Textbook**

Students will need the correct book for their instrument: Violin, Viola, Cello, or Bass.

Fourth grade: Essential Elements 2000 for Strings, Book 1 + CD/DVD

Fifth grade: Essential Elements 2000 for Strings, Book 2 + CD

You can find these books in a number of places. Locally, please visit **Da Capo Music** at **32158 Camino Capistrano, Suite 102, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675**. Phone number: (949) 443-0912. If you wish to order it online, it can be found on Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble.com, and numerous other sites. We may also have a limited number of copies available at the campus bookstore in the near future.

### **Acquiring an Instrument**

If your son/daughter does not yet already have an orchestral string instrument (violin, viola, cello) you will need to rent or purchase one for them to practice and perform with. SMES does not loan out instruments (except for bass); rather we work with established music stores in the community to give everyone a range of available instrument options. String instruments have the benefit of coming in fractional sizes (full or 4/4, 3/4, 1/2, 1/4, 1/8, 1/16, 1/32) so that students can find an instrument that best suits their physical layout. All music stores will have measuring devices, and most online stores have a guide to determining the proper sizing at home using a ruler. You may either purchase an instrument, or rent. At the beginning stages of string education, instrument rental is the preferred route.

I personally recommend the four shops listed here. They are full-service workshops that not only sell and rent instruments, but also have experienced luthiers (instrument makers and restorers) on staff that handle all maintenance and repairs on-site, and will be happy to answer any questions you might have:

Jonathan and David Morey  
4834 Woodruff Ave.  
Lakewood, CA 90713  
www.moreysmusic.com  
(562) 420-9532

Roger Foster  
224 South Olive  
Orange, CA 92866  
www.fostersviolinshop.com  
(714) 639-4480

Michael and Rena Weisshaar  
1763 Orange Ave.  
Costa Mesa, CA 92627  
(949) 548-1287

Stephen R. Davy  
31954 Virginia Way  
Laguna Beach, CA 92651  
(949) 499-5088

Please note that neither I nor the school receives any form of compensation from these establishments for recommending them to our students. They have simply proven themselves in decades of excellent service to Orange County musicians, both amateur and professional.

In addition to the instrument itself, string students need the following accessories. Where appropriate we've listed recommended brands/types:

- Instrument, Bow, and Case
- Cleaning cloth
- Specific equipment: VIOLIN/VIOLA: houlder pad or rest (A simple foam block or sponge with a rubber band works just fine; also try brands: Kun, Wolf, Mach One), CELLO: Endpin anchor
- Rosin (Violin/Viola: lighter colored, Cello: darker colored, Bass: bass rosin)
- Extra set of strings (Dominant, Vision, Helicore, recommended for most students)

Most small accessories (rosin and strings) are available in the SMES bookstore !

### **Citizenship/Grading**

School-wide behavioral standards will be strictly enforced at all times. As this course involves significant amounts of discussion and listening on the part of all students, those individuals who fail to focus on the material at hand, do not maintain a respectful and appropriate composure to both the instructor and their peers, or routinely forget their materials will find their grades affected substantially.

As a performance ensemble, grades are based entirely on participation and preparedness. A successful student comes to rehearsal on time with all necessary materials, plays in all performances, focuses on the lesson being taught, and has put in the practice time to use the skills that he/she learns to make effective musical decisions throughout the year. Please note that instrumental music students must perform with their ensemble in the two major school concerts each year to receive a passing grade in this course.

### **Department Philosophy**

At SMES, we believe that everyone is on an artistic journey. Through experiences in Dance, Music and Theater, students discover and nurture the artist within. As students are introduced to the fundamentals of the art forms, they learn HOW to learn.

As their skills increase through practice, they become comfortable in viewing theirs -- and others' -- work in the arts as a journey, not as a destination. We believe the power of the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. As members of ensembles, students celebrate their own work and the work of their peers. The transforming power of the Arts is vividly experienced as students become conduits connecting their humanity to generations of artists and audiences.

Consequently, the Performing Arts Department seeks to impart to its students through its K-12 curriculum an enduring understanding of specific knowledge, principles, and habits of mind such as:

- Learn and apply fundamentals skills and techniques in performance, listening and observation, and composition.
- Understand art as humanity -- an experience with who we are while remembering others before us.
- Understand art as community -- in ensemble-building, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
- Appreciate art as a creative and critical process

### **To The Parent**

I am committed to helping your son/daughter learn, and I look forward to working with your family. If you have any questions or concerns, you are welcome to contact me at any time at [\*\*gwie@smes.org\*\*](mailto:gwie@smes.org).