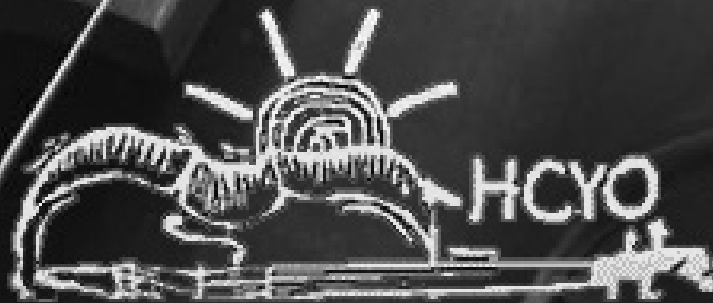


Hill Country
Youth Orchestra
Handbook



"Bringing the joy of the orchestra
experience to the youth of the Hill
Country"

Welcome to the Hill Country Youth Orchestras!

Our goal: “**Bringing the joy of the orchestra experience to the youth of the Hill Country.**” We are grateful for your talented children and your support.

The information contained in this *Family Handbook* will assist students and their families to maximize their experiences as members of the Hill Country Youth Orchestras (HCYO).

We are pleased to have an excellent and very qualified faculty working with our players. The different levels of orchestras and ensembles are intended to help each student grow at his or her own pace as a player and musician.

HCYO is an outreach ministry of the First United Methodist church of Kerrville, Texas. Operating funds for the Orchestras come from grants and private donation. Private donations are vital to the existence of HCYO. To insure the future of the *Hill Country Youth Orchestras*, donations are gladly accepted and much appreciated! Please make your tax deductible donations payable to the HCYO and mail to 321 Thompson Drive, Kerrville, TX 78028.

Hill Country Youth Orchestra Contact Information: (Check the website for weekly rehearsal notes and announcements!) www.hcyo.org

Rev. Don McAvoy, Facilitator: 830-257-0809 or
donmcavoy@kfumc.org

Sharon Kubenka, Staff Assistant, 830-257-0811 or skubenka@hcyo.org

Pat Lee, Kathleen C. Cailloux Director of Education and Hill Country Youth Orchestra Conductor Chair, 830-257-4764 or plee@hcyo.org

HCYO Facts

The Hill Country Youth Orchestras are a result of the Suzuki String Program begun in Kerrville in 1987. The Suzuki Program was funded by Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Rohe through the Kerrville Performing Arts Society.

Hill Country Youth Orchestras, Inc. was organized in the fall of 1995. In the summer of 1998, a board of directors was formed, which now carries on the business of running the organization. As of February 1999, HCYO is a 501(c) (3) charitable organization with a permanent endowment to assure the future of the Orchestras. All funds are obtained from private donations and grants. Because of the generosity of our donors and the community, the orchestras are privileged to offer a very generous scholarship program for its players. Donations are always appreciated and vital to the organization.

Students in the orchestras come from Kerrville, Ingram, Hunt, Center Point, Comfort, Fredericksburg, Boerne, Bulverde, and San Antonio. There are four graded orchestras within the organization that allow student to progress at their own pace. String students are encouraged to study privately and are recommended to the appropriate level orchestra through auditions held each year at the beginning of the HCYO season. Woodwind, brass, and percussion players audition in the fall of each year.

Orchestra Assignment Policy

The following criteria are used to place musicians in the four orchestras:

Twinkle Beginning Strings Class is the first ensemble group experience. Students, with a minimum of instruction, who have mastered “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” may begin in this group. Students shall play for the HCYO conductors after they have been taking private lessons for at least a month. They will be considered a part of HCYO and will be eligible for scholarships and instrument rental from HCYO.

Con Moto Orchestra is comprised primarily of students (age 8 and up) with one to two years experience or in Suzuki Books One and Two. The majority of players will be of elementary school age.

Cavatina Orchestra is comprised primarily of students with two to three years experience or in Suzuki Books Two, Three, and Four. The majority of students will be of junior high school age.

Hill Country Youth Orchestra is comprised primarily of the most advanced students in the orchestra program with three to four years experience. Previous orchestra experience is required. The majority of students will be of high school age. Students should be at the level of UIL Grade I or II Solos or Suzuki Books IV and up.

General Information

Changes in orchestra placement are made at the start of each fall semester. Placement in the Con Moto, Cavatina, or Hill Country Youth Orchestra is by audition. Auditions are not the sole determining factor for placement in any of the orchestras. Maturity, sight-reading ability, overall musicianship, leadership ability, student preference, and instruments needs of the orchestras are also taken into consideration.

New students will audition for correct orchestra placement. It is vital that the orchestra assignment policy be administered fairly and consistently to develop each student’s love of music through playing their instruments with other students at their appropriate level.

Attendance Policy

Ensembles must rehearse together regularly to be successful. We hope the commitments made to the good of the orchestras by each student and their family will be the only encouragement needed for satisfactory attendance by HCYO members.

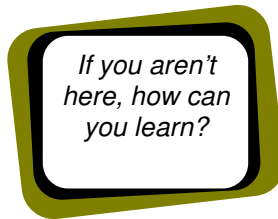
Rehearsals

Monday night rehearsals are **mandatory** for all orchestra students. Students should be fully warmed up and ready to play by the rehearsal start time. (It is recommended you schedule 15 minutes for warm up.) Everyone must be in their seat 10 minutes prior to the start of rehearsal.

Each fall and spring semester, HCYO students will be required to attend the Sunday warm-up rehearsal, before each concert. These dates are published on the website prior to the fall and spring semester.

Uniforms

Each student will be assigned a Semester. A uniform cleaning fee are to be returned after the spring



concert uniform in the Fall of \$10 will be assessed. Uniforms concert.

Concerts

All concerts are **mandatory**. dismissal from HCYO and/or the exceptions must have prior approval from the HCYO Director of Education. (See Excused Absences policy in next section.) Seating may be changed at the conductor's discretion for students not attending all rehearsals.

Missing a concert is grounds for scholarship program. Any

Attendance Policy and Absences

Because scholarship funds are limited, scholarships can only be awarded and maintained for students with excellent attendance.

In case of a family emergency, the staff assistant is to be notified immediately and given an explanation. Excused absences are those with **uncontrollable circumstances**.

Excuses for absence **include** (but are not limited to):

- Illness
- Family emergency or death in the family
- Mandatory school event
- Court mandated visitations

Excuses for absence **do not include** (but are not limited to):

- Family vacations
- Extracurricular school activities
- Studying for exams

Unexcused absences are not allowed and **may result in termination of the scholarship program and/or dismissal from HCYO.

**Absences will not be excused without a written note, phone call, or e-mail from the parent addressed to the staff assistant at 321 Thompson Dr., 830-285-9781, or skubenka@hcyo.org.

**Rehearsals begin promptly at the time indicated on the rehearsal schedule. Tardiness or leaving early is counted as either an excused or unexcused absence as defined in the preceding paragraphs.

String Instrument Care

Temperature/Humidity

- Keep at safe range (55-85° F).

NEVER LEAVE INSTRUMENTS IN AN UNATTENDED CAR

- Store away from heating vents and gas heaters.
- Keep a small cloth over the f holes for violins and violas.
- Do not store instruments in garages or storage areas.



Handling

- Always unpack violins and violas on the FLOOR.
- Hold basses and cellos carefully by neck and shoulders when unpacking.
- Take bows out of cases very carefully.
- Do not repair loose bridges, pegs, or chin rests. Please avoid “propping” anything up in a corner.
- Cellos and basses, remember to put the end pins inside ANYTIME the instrument is not being played.
- Keep your instruments away from small children who may unknowingly damage them.

Care of Wood

- Polish the red or brown wood with a special violin polish only. The instrument probably only needs this every month and a half. “Cleaner” is rarely necessary.
- Point out changes or cracks to teachers as soon as possible.
- Shoulder pads for violins and violas should be stored away from the wood of the instrument to avoid scrapes.

Rosin

- Buy quality rosin if possible or use the rosin provided.
- Wipe powder off of wood and strings after each playing session. (It must remain on the bow hair.)
- Loosen bow after each playing session to prevent warping.
- Avoid touching the bow hair.

Many of the instruments are owned by music stores or the Hill Country Youth Orchestras. In either case, everyone will benefit from the love and care of these instruments. With proper care they can last over 300 years (this is no joke). These instruments insure the future of our program and the future of orchestras in the area. We simply must treat these items with respect and extreme care. Avoid cracks, scrapes, and other “dings” if possible. Moms and dads: please keep youngsters of all ages from swinging bows and instruments around when they are in use.

Notes on Practicing

- Choose a quiet room where you won't be distracted.
- Set one or two simple goals for the practice session.
- Frequent, short practice periods are best for promoting muscle memory.
- Stay relaxed throughout the practice period – stop and stretch, shake out hands.
- If something is feeling awkward or tight, try to find a more natural, relaxed position.

1. Review your position

2. Begin tonal exercises (5 minutes)

Pluck the open string to listen to resonance.

- Make sure the string is totally quiet before drawing the bow starting with a bite to get the string vibrating.
- Keep enough pressure using the first finger of right hand to keep sound “in the string” and resonating.
- Make sure there is a definite stop to the end of the sound.
- Listen and strive for a more resonant, beautiful sound.

3. Play an older, easier exercise that you have already mastered (5-10 minutes).

- After playing the exercise, take your hands off the violin and bow, shake them out, and reset to play the exercise again. This promotes muscle memory.

4. Play a new exercise (5-10 minutes).

- Focus on a single goal for the practice session – better rhythm, finger pattern, intonation, bow stroke, phrasing, or tone.
- Start at different places in the exercise. Learn the last line first, then the next to the last line, etc.
- Repeat short sections a number of times but only while focused on what you'd like to improve – don't reinforce what you don't like.

- Use your ear as your guide for what works and what doesn't. If you want a different sound, try something different to achieve it.

5. **To master a difficult passage

- **Learn it initially in a very slow tempo.
- **After playing it successfully at the slow tempo, increase the tempo gradually, paying attention to all of the technical challenges at every speed and making certain that you can play it perfectly.
- **Continue to increase the tempo and master at every speed until it reaches the correct performance tempo.

6. End with a “recital”

- Do a “performance” of your just completed work as if in front of an audience. Take a bow for what you've accomplished!

Expectations

As part of the full orchestra participation tuition scholarship and the partial lesson scholarships, students will be required to acknowledge these generous gifts by performing in a minimum of one community service presentation, outside of the Monday night rehearsal venue, each semester.

We encourage our students to listen to classical music and to attend classical concerts whenever possible. Weekly announcements will include information concerning concerts by the *Symphony of the Hills* and the *Kerrville Performing arts Society*. Discounted tickets are available for students. Our public radio station plays classical music in the afternoons and evenings.

