

Gold and Silver Orchestras Handbook 2017

What is the Gold Orchestra?

The **Gold Orchestra** is a non-profit youth string orchestra founded in 1989 by Dr. David Littrell, university distinguished professor of music at Kansas State University. A keen understanding of the role of music in the developing mind and an enthusiasm for music in general led Dr. Littrell to found the orchestra. He believes strongly that student musicians gain a love for music while developing discipline that carries over to many areas of adult life.

Initially, the **Gold Orchestra** was conceived as a single youth ensemble. Ten students in grades 4-6 comprised the Gold Orchestra at its founding in 1989. Within three years of its founding, the Gold Orchestra performed at The Midwest Clinic in Chicago in 1992 after a national selection process. Over the years, however, it became apparent that additional opportunities were necessary to better serve the string students of Manhattan and surrounding communities; therefore, in 2012 Dr. Littrell divided the Gold Orchestra into three: the **Gold**, the **Silver** and the **Bronze Training Orchestra**. The three orchestras together now boast nearly 100 members, grades K-12, and remain under the *organizational* name of **Gold Orchestra**.

- The **Silver Orchestra** also began in 1989 and comprised beginning string students. In the fall of 2012, the Silver Orchestra became an intermediate orchestra to provide more age- and ability-appropriate literature. The Silver Orchestra shares the November formal concert with the Gold Orchestra. Mrs. Kristen Toll, a music teacher in USD 383, is the conductor of the Silver Orchestra.
- In the fall of 2012, the **Bronze Training Orchestra** took the place of the former Silver Orchestra's role of training beginning students to be orchestra members. Christina Minton, a violinist and a Junior at KSU, is the conductor of the Bronze Training Orchestra.

Gold Orchestra Accomplishments. The Gold Orchestra has achieved much in the years since its inception. In 2001 and 2006, members of the Gold Orchestra performed concerts in Carnegie Hall. Competing in a 2010 nationwide blind audition, the orchestra was one of only eight selected to perform at Chicago's prestigious Midwest Clinic, an international band and orchestra conference. In addition, the Gold Orchestra has made numerous tours throughout the United States and has performed in Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, England, Missouri, Memphis and Nashville, Seattle and Vancouver, and Dallas.

How does a student join the Gold/Silver Orchestra? Auditions are held in mid-May to give string students an opportunity to join the Gold or Silver Orchestra. This audition also decides the orchestra in which the student will be placed. The Gold Orchestra accommodates the most accomplished string students while the Silver Orchestra serves as an intermediate orchestra and is for students aspiring to join the Gold Orchestra. Seating auditions for placement within the orchestra take place in September.

What are seating auditions? Seating positions in an orchestra serve to place the musician in an ideal location according to their skill level and leadership abilities. All students are required to audition for their chair seating. Several passages of music are chosen from the fall repertoire, and a short audition is conducted before and after one of the late September rehearsals.

How does a student join the Bronze Training Orchestra? Participation in the Bronze Training Orchestra does not require an audition. Students should have some experience playing their instrument, and should be able to identify notes and read simple rhythms. Interested students should contact Dr. Littrell (litmus@ksu.edu). The Bronze Training Orchestra meets on Saturday mornings beginning September 9.

What are the responsibilities of a Gold/Silver Orchestra member?

- You MUST be a member of your public school orchestra, if there is one available.
- You MUST commit to the fall season that begins in late August and runs until November.
- You MUST attend ALL rehearsals and concerts, unless otherwise excused

Criteria for excused absence:

- A. Total excused absences, including illness, should be limited to two or fewer. Missing more than two rehearsals, regardless of the reason, is grounds for removal from the orchestra.
 - B. Excused absences such as important family trips and weddings, will require a written (email) two-week advanced notification with a parent's statement of the reason(s) for the absence.
 - C. An additional practice chart, signed by the parent, will be required at the rehearsal following the absence.
 - D. Students should be aware that absences, for any reason, may affect their chair seating.
 - E. Absences to "sleep in" or take a day off are NOT excused. The intent of the policy is to provide some accommodation for families and students with valid schedule conflicts.
 - F. The final dress rehearsal (Nov. 11) and Rock Springs are 100% required rehearsal days. No students will be excused from these days for any reason.
- You are required to bring your music folder, pencil, and instrument to each rehearsal. No cell phone use anytime in the rehearsal room, wearing of hats, or gum chewing during rehearsals. Please consider the appropriateness of your dress when attending rehearsals. Students are expected to "look nice" at every rehearsal.
 - You are responsible for being punctual to all orchestra rehearsals, concerts, and other activities. Arrive no later than fifteen minutes before each rehearsal.
 - You MUST attend the October retreat at Rock Springs 4-H Camp, which is always the last weekend in October. (Students who are considering taking the ACT need to schedule it on some other Saturday than Rock Springs weekend).
 - You are expected to practice and learn all pieces during individual practice time. Practice charts will be distributed during the season. The section with the highest number of minutes (averaged by number in your section) will win a pizza party or equivalent!
 - You are responsible for proper concert attire.

Why are there so many rules and expectations? An orchestra (much like a sports team, marching band, choir, etc.) excels only when the collective membership works towards a common goal. If any one member is unable to play his or her part, then the collective result is less than satisfactory. By its very nature, an orchestra relies on the unity of each section to create the masterpiece that was initially envisioned by each composer. This may be accomplished ONLY by commitment and hard work. The end result is rewarding and always magnificent.

What is the fall schedule? The Gold/Silver Orchestra's fall schedule includes weekly Saturday rehearsals from 9:00-11:00 a.m. in the McCain Music Wing*, a Rock Springs retreat, and concert performances. A calendar is distributed via email in the summer months. The Bronze Training Orchestra does not attend Rock Springs or participate in the concert performances listed above and will follow a rehearsal scheduled outlined by their conductor.

Are there any additional opportunities? Dr. Littrell provides numerous opportunities for the student musicians to broaden their musical experiences.

- **String Fling** is held every year at Kansas State University and is open to all string students, grades 5-9.
- Dr. Littrell offers the Cedar Vista **Senior** and **Junior Music Camps**, in addition to a **Cello Camp** during early summer. These camps are not limited to Gold Orchestra members; all string students are welcome.
- The **K-State Orchestra** performs numerous times throughout the fall and spring semesters. Dr. Littrell conducts the orchestra and encourages all GSB members and their families to attend. The concerts are free.
- The GO may perform **additional concerts** in the spring and summer but are not required.
- **Tour opportunities** usually occur in, but are not limited to, the late spring and early summer months. Past tours have included: Carnegie Hall performances – 2001, 2006; Midwest Clinic performances – 1992, 2010; England tour – 1997; Performances in Nebraska, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, the Grand Canyon, & Dallas; and, Memphis-Nashville tour – 2012.

What expenses are associated with Gold/Silver Orchestra participation?

- Tuition of \$140
- Rock Springs weekend of \$145
- Music stand. Manhasset stands are available in bulk orders at a great discount if there is enough demand. A Manhasset music stand, though not mandatory, is far superior to wire stands for use at home and at Rock Springs.
- Concert dress

Girls: all black – black long-sleeved blouse and skirt/dress slacks. Skirt length must fall below the knee because we are on stage. Black shoes.

Boys: all black – black long-sleeved shirt; long black tie; black dress slacks; black shoes and socks.

- Supply refreshments after concerts.

Who may I contact with questions?

David Littrell, (dlitmus@ksu.edu) – Cody Toll (cody.toll@gmail.com) – Kristen Toll (kristenmtoll@gmail.com)