



ORCHESTRA

Helix Charter High School
Michael Benge, Associate Director of Instrumental Music

COURSE PROFILE

The Helix Orchestra offers differentiated levels of instruction to string instrument musicians in grades 9 through 12. Because of this variety of performance abilities, a wide variety of literature levels are studied throughout the school year to challenge advanced students but also ensure young students are not left behind.

THE HELIX INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC HANDBOOK

All students are expected to thoroughly read and familiarize themselves with the content of our department handbook. It will be addressed during the first few days of school and is always available online at http://helixinstrumental.org/images/uploads/2015:16_Fall_Handbook_copy.pdf and also in our Dropbox. All instrumental music students are held to the policies in this handbook, regardless of prior knowledge or understanding.

DROPBOX

Our department disburses materials via Dropbox on a regular basis. You can also get your own account for free. Please email Mr. Benge (benge@helixcharter.net) for the Dropbox link if you haven't already received it.

CURRICULUM

Orchestra primarily studies contemporary and classical string ensemble literature for the purpose of learning musical skills and public performance. Because this ensemble is mixed with all four grade levels, occasionally the ensemble may be split into different groups to accommodate the less experienced players as well as the more advanced. Assessment and grading is LARGELY performance based, but individual student ability and individual effort on their instrument are also assessed.

The student will focus on all areas of good practice and performance technique. The musical styles covered may include, but are not limited to, contemporary works, classical literature, concert, jazz, and romantic literature. Each student will be expected to perform at all concerts.

All members of this course are expected to commit to personal and ensemble excellence. Regular and faithful attendance to all rehearsals, dress rehearsals, and concerts is understood. This is a comprehensive, performance-based class. You are expected to learn notes and rhythms *before* attending the next rehearsal. Rehearsals are not for learning your part, but for learning how your part fits into the score.

Please bring a pencil to every rehearsal and use it regularly to mark your music. Be early for rehearsal. Warm up and be mentally prepared before we begin. ("If you are on time, you are late.") Commit to being an integral part of the ensemble. That means being supportive of each other, patient, and helpful.

If you are a section leader you have the added responsibility of LEADING your section. That means guiding your section both technically and musically, not only during sectionals, but also during each and every rehearsal. Section leaders are expected to organize and lead sectionals at least once every two weeks and to communicate with the conductor regarding the progress of sectionals.

Section members are expected to help create high-functioning, efficient sectionals by being on time, prepared, and engaged.

PRIMARY TEXTS

Orchestra students use an orchestra method book, *New Directions for Strings, Book 2*, to ensure any gaps in musical development from prior training are addressed as soon as possible. All students can benefit greatly from these basic studies and should look at them as an opportunity to hone their fundamentals.

A classroom set will be provided, but students should consider buying their own copy for use in home practice. Nick Rail Music provides us a special rate and a road rep who can deliver to school. Alan's Music in La Mesa is a local alternative.

STUDENT MATERIALS

Required materials for participation in the Helix Bands are specifically defined in the Helix Instrumental Music Handbook, viewable at http://helixinstrumental.org/images/uploads/2015:16_Fall_Handbook_copy.pdf. However, for general daily purposes please have the following:

- Student's individual instrument and all equipment necessary to play.
- Sheet music, both provided and downloaded/printed from Dropbox.
- No. 2 or equivalent mechanical PENCILS (NEVER mark on sheet music in pen). A pencil is expected to be on your music stand at every rehearsal.
- Each student will need to supply his or her own black tux or long black dress for concert performances. If necessary, a packet will be distributed to families who missed Paperwork Day in the summer.

CONCERTS AND PERFORMANCES

Below is a typical, tentative list of performances in which the bands will participate. These are subject to change but generally follow the same rough weeks/dates every year. See the calendar at www.helixinstrumental.com/pages/calendar for final information and dates.

- A fall concert and/or Veteran's Day concert.
- Winter concert in December.
- Various concerts and concert festivals in the spring, with the traditional entire department POPS! Concert toward the end of the school year.

EVALUATION

Performance assessments will mostly be done through the use of Smart Music. All students will need their own home subscription for Smart Music (www.smartmusic.com). Students who are unable to have access to Smart Music at home may do their assignments at school. Students are required to use SmartMusic for their individual performance assignments.

Attached to this syllabus is an excerpt from the Helix Instrumental Music Handbook detailing the grading policy. Please familiarize yourself with it and the practice expectations outlined therein. Students are trained to practice effectively and, as such, it is the responsibility of each student to prepare for all performance evaluations.

It is especially important to note that the departmental grading policy has shifted to 1/3 Participation and Attendance, 2/3 Performance Evaluation. See the handbook for details.