

IF YOUR STUDENT PLAYS A STRING INSTRUMENT...

Youth Symphonies and the Hopkins JHS Orchestra Program



Many string students (violin, viola, cello, and bass) each year play in outside youth symphonies in the area in addition to playing in the Hopkins Orchestras. These two programs are designed to complement each other and work together to provide **the most complete music education for students possible**. All youth symphonies (such as California Youth Symphony, Golden State Youth Orchestra, San Jose Youth Symphony, Oakland Youth Orchestra, etc.) strongly recommend (and many even require) that their students play in their school's orchestra, especially if their school has a "high quality" orchestra program (as Hopkins does). Here's why:

School orchestra classes meet every day. This allows students to spend time focusing on musical "ensemble techniques". Perfecting these techniques in a school group allows the student to have much more success in outside groups like youth symphonies. Youth symphony directors do not want to spend their limited weekly rehearsal time working on these concepts – they assume that the students are working on these in their school groups. These concepts include the following:

- **Intonation/Playing in Tune (Adjusting to the group)**
- **Ensemble Bowing Techniques and Uniformity**
- **Musical Style and Articulations**
- **Sight-reading (Performing music that has not been previously rehearsed)**

The Hopkins Orchestra program is designed to provide a different, yet equally valuable musical experience for students than they may get in a youth symphony. The Hopkins Orchestra provides the following for students in addition to the above:

- **The ability to perform advanced Junior High and High School orchestra literature.**
- **Performances that are judged by professional musicians and competitions against other school orchestras and music groups.**
- **Daily rehearsals providing the opportunity for students to "perfect" pieces of music with a very high level of musicianship.**

Youth symphonies provide these valuable, yet different opportunities for students:

- **The opportunity to play with students from throughout the area.**
- **The ability to perform "Full Orchestra" literature, featuring wind instruments and percussion as well as strings.**
- **The challenge of learning difficult music in a relatively short amount of rehearsal time.**
- **The opportunity to perform in very high-quality performance halls (in most cases).**

The Hopkins Orchestra Program qualifies as a "high quality" program. There are two levels of string orchestra classes. The **Hopkins Intermediate Orchestra** (mostly 7th grade) is considered to be one of the best Middle School String Orchestras in the Bay Area. This group has received the highest-possible "Unanimous Superior" ratings at California Music Educators Association (CMEA) Orchestra Festivals each year since 2009. They have also earned 1st Place awards at music competitions numerous times, often competing against other schools' "advanced" orchestras.

The **Hopkins Advanced Orchestra** (mostly 8th grade) rates among the best in California and the United States. The Advanced Orchestra has consistently received "Unanimous Superior" ratings at CMEA Festivals since the class began in 2006, often receiving the highest rating of any group performing at the festival. They have received 1st Place awards at the Anaheim/Disneyland Music Festival each year since 2006 as well, also often receiving the highest rating at the festival of any Middle School or High School group. In 2010, 2012, 2013, & 2014 the Hopkins Advanced Orchestra received "perfect" scores of "100" at the Anaheim/Disneyland Festival – only one other group from any school has accomplished this since 1995! Many festival adjudicators and clinicians have referred to the Hopkins Advanced Orchestra as the "best middle school orchestra I've ever heard". The Hopkins Advanced Orchestra was selected twice (2012 and 2017) as a Featured Performer at the California All-State Music Education Conference ---- only the 2nd ensemble from Fremont USD ever selected to perform at a Music Education Conference!

All Hopkins Orchestra students are strongly encouraged (**but not required**) to participate in these local youth symphonies. More information about these groups is available from the Hopkins Music Director. Students who participate in youth symphonies are also strongly encouraged to participate in the Hopkins Orchestra Program. **Together, these two programs can provide the best musical experience possible for a string student!**