



# HIGHLAND ORCHESTRAS

## *2025-2026 Orchestra Handbook*

Dear Highland High School Orchestra Members and Families,

Welcome to the 2025-2026 school year. We are very excited for another great year and can not wait to get started. We are so fortunate to be able to make music together and we will strive for excellence both individually and as a group to enrich our lives and the lives of others. Please review the materials in this handbook as a family. Ninety percent of the information you need to have a successful year is in this packet. Please make sure to put all the dates and other information in your family's calendar and we thank you for the opportunity to teach your students.

### **Early due dates**

*Friday, August 1, 2025 - Uniform fees and Handbook forms are due.*

*Friday, August 15, 2025 - Symphonic Strings Retreat fee due.*

### **Communication**

Craig Ghormley

Director of Orchestras

Highland High School

[craig.ghormley@gilbertschools.net](mailto:craig.ghormley@gilbertschools.net)

Amy Bennett

Orchestra Director

Highland High School

[amy.bennett@gilbertschools.net](mailto:amy.bennett@gilbertschools.net)

Highland High School Orchestra Office- (480) 497-3119

Website- [highlandorchestras.org](http://highlandorchestras.org)

Booster Email- [highlandorchestras@gmail.com](mailto:highlandorchestras@gmail.com)

Facebook- "Friends of Highland Orchestras"

Instagram- [@highlandorchestras](https://www.instagram.com/highlandorchestras)

**All students should be members of our Google Classroom and Remind. See registration info below:**

### **Google Classroom**

Starlight Serenade - 46d6ecc7

Concert Orchestra - htg4vsu2

Symphony Orchestra - z7hbkknc

Sinfonia - 5zdsbhv5

Chamber (6th Hour) - wrugd2ej

Chamber (7th Hour) - kujhcr5y

### **Remind- text code to 81010**

Starlight Serenade - @starlite

Concert Orchestra - @hhsco1

Symphonic Strings/Symphony - @hhs2ndhour

Sinfonia - @hhssinf

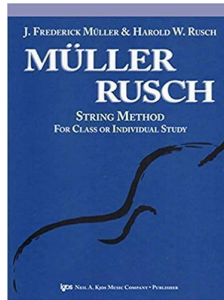
Chamber Orchestra - @hhsco2

## Required Materials

- Folders and music – these will be assigned, in most cases, two students per folder. Music is NOT a disposable item. **Students are responsible for replacement costs for lost or damaged items.**
- Instrument (in good working shape – violins/violas need to have 4 fine tuners on their instrument – these are necessary for students to be able to tune themselves quickly).

Violins/Violas with two instruments need to bring in a handwritten note signed by a parent saying that they have a quality instrument at home and will **practice daily**. Please turn these notes in to Mr. Ghormley by Friday, July 25, 2025.

- A small soft cloth for cleaning instrument
- Rosin – Please write your name on the box and the rosin. [For all bass players – We require Pop’s or Kolstein Rosin]
- Shoulder Rest (for violins & violas) [We recommend a “KUN” or “Everest” - they are the most durable]
- Permanent Luggage/ID tag (with name and phone number clearly written on the tag) [“Highland Orchestras” ID tags are available for \$2.00.]
- Pencil
- Music stand, metronome, and tuner for home practice
- **Strolling Strings** -1 inch Black Binder needed by Friday, July 25, 2025
- **Concert Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra** -Muller Rusch Book 4 (Blue) needed by Thurs., July 31.



- Performance Mute - rubber mutes are the cheapest! (2 Hole mutes will not fall off your instrument)



## Lockers

Students will be issued instrument storage lockers. Lockers provide minimal security, and the Gilbert Unified School District is not liable for losses. Students are not to leave valuable personal items or money in these lockers. Lockers are for instrument storage only.

## School Instruments

In some cases, school instruments may be made available for individual students' use. An “Instrument Usage Form” must be filled out and completed in order for the student to use the school instrument. Students using school instruments are responsible for any damage that may occur due to their fault or negligence. Students or parents should be sure to communicate with the orchestra director if they have any concerns about their instrument.

## **Financials**

Each orchestra student will have their own orchestra account that you can deposit money into to cover costs of uniforms, trips, etc.

Last year Gilbert Public Schools began charging class fees for orchestra of \$25 for each semester. This is paid along with other school fees through the bookstore and Infinite Campus. **These fees are not paid through the orchestra boosters.** Once these fees are collected we will credit your student's orchestra account. These fees can be used to pay for uniforms, trips, and other items at the director's discretion. **Please do this first so we can give proper financial credit at the beginning of the year.**

Student accounts will be once again kept in *My Music Office*- [mymusicoffice.com](http://mymusicoffice.com). Returning families will use their same account as last year. New families should have received an email with instructions on Friday, July 18, 2025. Please let us know if you did not receive this or have any questions.

After you've paid your class fees through Infinite Campus you can make more payments when needed through the Orchestra Boosters. No cash will be accepted. You can deposit money the following three ways.

1. VENMO- Our account name is @highland-orchestras. You will need to put your student's name and performing group in the memo section.
2. Checks should be made out to Highland HS Orchestra Boosters. Please put the student's name on the memo line and enclose it in an envelope. The front of the envelope should have the student's name and performing group.
3. Fees can also be paid using the Arizona Tax Credit (form attached). Information and form are also available online at [gilbertschools.net/taxcredit](http://gilbertschools.net/taxcredit).

## **Uniforms**

All students must have an Orchestra T-Shirt to be worn to school on performance days and when we travel. All orchestras wear the same t-shirt. Students who already have an orchestra T-shirt that fits and is in good shape do not need to order another one. T-Shirt Cost will be **\$10.00**.

Concert Uniforms will be fitted and issued during the first few weeks of school. A uniform usage fee will be due before your student's uniform will be sent home. This fee will pay for the use of the uniform for the entire school year and the final dry cleaning. Students are expected to properly maintain and dry clean their uniform throughout the performance season.

Students are responsible for returning all uniform parts in good condition, as well as replacement costs for lost or damaged uniforms/parts. You will not be responsible for the end of the year dry cleaning, as we will have all uniforms dry cleaned together at the end of the year.

The following is a listing of uniform needs for each student:

### **Tuxedo (All Orchestras)**

- Tuxedo (Coat, Pants, Tie, Cummerbund) - checked out from the school (**\$35**)
- Wing collared tuxedo shirt, Black dress shoes, Black dress socks - purchased by the student
- Orchestra t-shirt (**\$10** if needed)

### **Starlight Serenade (strolling)**

- Starlight Serenade dress (Dry-clean only) - checked out from the school (**\$20**)
- Black dress shoes & sheer black nylons - purchased by the student

### **Chamber Orchestra (6th & 7th Hour) and Concert Orchestra (1st hour)**

- Black skirt (machine washable), Tie, Cumberbund - checked out from the school (\$20)
- Wing collared tuxedo shirt, Black dress shoes, Sheer black nylons - purchased by the student
- Orchestra t-shirt (\$10 if needed)

### **Symphony Orchestra (2nd Hour) and Sinfonia (3rd Hour)**

- Symphony/Sinfonia dress (Purchased by student from the school - \$80) - Fitting, ordering, and delivery will be handled through the HHS Orchestra Boosters.
- Black dress shoes & sheer black nylons - purchased by the student
- Orchestra t-shirt (\$10 if needed)

*\*Tuxedo shirts may be purchased from any formal wear shop in the area  
(The Tuxedo Lady: 4210 E. Main Street (**highly recommend!**), Men's Wearhouse, Amazon, etc.  
Estimated cost is approx. \$25.00.*

### **Travel**

Each year the Highland Orchestras plan field trips and outside learning opportunities to supplement what we do in class. Here are the current plans and potential costs for each ensemble.

- **Symphonic Strings**- will be traveling to Camp Shadow Pines in Heber, AZ for Retreat on September 5-6, 2025. The total cost is \$200 and balance is due by Friday, August 15, 2025.
- **Symphony Orchestra & Sinfonia**- This year the instrumental music program has decided to not do Spring Tour as we have the past few years. We are changing to a model of doing larger trips every other year. We understand that this news will be disappointing to some, especially seniors, but believe it is what is best for the program at this time. The cost of group travel has become very expensive and this will allow us to accommodate all orchestra students moving forward. Plans are in the works for special performances at different venues away from Highland as well as potential optional field trips to performances and theme parks this school year. More information on these will be shared at a later date.
- **Chamber Orchestra**- An overnight trip is being planned and will cost approximately \$250.00. More info on the date and location will be shared in August.
- **Concert Orchestra**- will be traveling to Tucson, AZ for the ABODA Festival on March 4, 2026 and is expected to cost approximately \$40.00.

### **Orchestra Grading Policy**

- Rehearsal Checks
- Music Checks/Playing Tests (Performance seating may also be determined from these)
  - Students that receive a score of 79% or lower will have the opportunity to redo their test for a higher grade after completing the required work as agreed upon by the student and the teacher.
  - Late music checks will be accepted but will not be considered for performance seating.
- Written assignments: Concert Reviews/Critiques
- Performances
  - Points for performances are awarded for successfully completing the following: Arriving on time for tuning/warm-up, complete uniform, audience etiquette, performance on stage, observation of the entire concert, and concert reflection.

At the end of each grading period, points will be totaled and put in percentage form.

A = 90 - 100%, B = 80 - 89%, C = 70 - 79%, D = 60 - 69%.

## Expectations

- Please be on time and ready to work when rehearsal begins. Please note that tardiness will also be dealt with as per the Highland High School attendance policy.
- Chewing gum, eating, or drinking during rehearsal or performance is not allowed. A water bottle is the only exception.
- Using a cell phone/smart watch during rehearsal, performance, or in the audience is not allowed. To avoid distraction, cell phones and smart watches need to be in the student's **backpack** for the duration of class. If a student violates this rule, the phone will be taken and put in a safe place by the teacher. The cell phone/smart watch may be retrieved by the parent at the end of the day.
- All students must keep their fingernails trimmed short, to enable them to play at the best of their ability.
- For our organization to function properly, all students must have the proper instrument, equipment, music, and a pencil.

**Orchestra is a performance-based class.** All members are expected to participate in all performances. An unexcused absence from a performance will result in the student's grade being lowered by 100 points. All make-up work must be completed in the appropriate amount of time.

**Excluding emergencies, absences from performances can only be excused by an email from the parents/guardians being received by Mr. Ghormley and Mrs. Bennett at least two weeks prior to the anticipated absence.** This includes conflicts due to other school related activities and events. In the case of an emergency, a phone call or email from the parents should be received as soon as possible; preferably before the performance. An email or phone call does not automatically excuse a student's absence, depending on what is contained in the note.

\*99% of all conflicts can be resolved if both parties involved have communicated at the appropriate time.

## The Importance of Attendance

Student attendance closely matches and nearly always mirrors academic achievement. Students who are absent from school miss the introduction of new material as well as the benefits of interacting with their peers in discussion, activities and presentations. Students who are chronically or habitually absent may be asked by their grade level administrator to provide documentation for excessive absences from medical personnel. Ideally, all attempts should be made by parents to schedule orthodontist, dentist and doctor appointments before or after school. Family vacations should be scheduled during school breaks.

## Extra-Curricular Activities

Students who are excessively absent, failing courses or have grades below a D, may be denied the ability to participate in field trips or other extra-curricular activities. This includes all athletic events as well as performing arts and other club events.

## Tardies

Students who arrive to class late are a distraction to the students in class as well as to their teacher. Please encourage your child to leave the house early enough to account for traffic and get to school on time.

## Additional District Policies

District policy requires all students who perform in AMEA adjudicated events to maintain a minimum grade point average of 2.00 and have no failing grades for the previous 9-week grading period. Students can be reinstated after the next 4 1/2 week grading period.

Bullying and/or hazing is not an acceptable behavior. Gilbert Public Schools' policies may be found in the student handbook and also on the GPS website. JIC-EG092711

**HIGHLAND ORCHESTRAS PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE**  
**FIRST SEMESTER 2025 - 2026**

---

Monday - Friday, July 28 - August 1, 2025

*All Orchestras* - Uniform Fitting during class

Friday, August 1, 2025

*Uniform Fees and Handbook forms Due for all orchestras.*

Friday, August 15, 2025

**Debut Concert** tickets available online to **Parents**

Friday, August 22, 2025

**Debut Concert** tickets available online to General Public

Friday & Saturday, September 5 & 6, 2025

*Symphonic Strings* Retreat at Camp Shadow Pines- Heber, AZ

Monday, September 15, 2025

HHS Orchestras **Debut Concert** HHS Auditorium

6:00 p.m. – *Concert Orchestra, Sinfonia, Starlight Serenade*

7:30 p.m. – *Starlight Serenade, Chamber Orchestra, Symphonic*

Friday, September 19, 2025

Fall Orchestra Festival at Highland HS

Perf. Times **TBA** *Sym. Strings, Sinfonia, Chamber, Concert*

*Volunteers will be needed as we are hosting.*

Tuesday, October 28, 2025

Orchestra Yearbook Pictures during class - *uniforms required*

Wednesday, November 12, 2025

**“Home for the Holidays”** tickets available online to **Parents**

Wednesday, November 19, 2025

**“Home for the Holidays”** tickets available online to Public

Wednesday, December 3, 2025

*Symphonic Strings/Starlight Serenade*

Performance at Valle del Oro RV Resort

Call time: 3:00 p.m. Performance: 6:30 p.m.

Friday & Saturday, December 12 & 13, 2025

HHS Orchestras **“Home for the Holidays” (2 days – 3 shows)**

**ALL ORCHESTRAS PERFORM IN EVERY SHOW**

*Three Performances*

**Dec. 12**

Call time: 6:00 p.m. Performance: 7:30 p.m.

**Dec. 13**

Call time: 1:00 p.m. Performance: 1:30 p.m.

*United Sound will perform in this show.*

**DINNER BREAK – (Off Campus)**

Call time: 7:00 p.m. Performance: 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, December 13, 2025

**Valentines Dinner** tickets go on sale at Holiday Concert @ 8 am

**HIGHLAND ORCHESTRAS PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE**  
**SECOND SEMESTER 2025 - 2026**

---

Saturday, January 17, 2026	AMEA Solo and Ensemble Festival Tier 1 @ Highland HS
Friday & Saturday, January 23 & 24, 2026	Regional Auditions @ Desert Ridge HS
Monday, January 26, 2026	<b>Festival Showcase Concert</b> tickets available online to <b>Parents</b>
Monday, February 2, 2026	<b>Festival Showcase Concert</b> tickets available to Public
Tuesday, February 10, 2026	Valentine Dinner Performance/Fund-Raiser at Highland HS “Crystal Ballroom” <b>6:00 - 9:30 pm</b> <b>All Orchestras (all students)</b>
Thursday, February 26, 2026	HHS Orchestras <b>Festival Showcase Concert</b> - HHS Auditorium 6:00 p.m. – <b>Chamber Orchestra, Sinfonia, Starlight Serenade</b> 7:30 p.m. – <b>Starlight Serenade, Concert Orchestra, Symphony</b>
Friday, February 27, 2026	ABODA Area Concert Festival @Highland HS <b>Symphony, Sinfonia, Chamber</b> <b>Volunteers will be needed as we are hosting.</b>
Monday, March 2, 2026	HJHS Orchestra Concert <b>7:00 p.m.</b> HHS Auditorium - <b>Symphony Orchestra</b>
Wednesday, March 4, 2026	<b>Concert Orchestra</b> to ABODA Area Concert Festival @Catalina Foothills HS, Tucson, AZ
Friday & Saturday, March 6 & 7, 2026	All-State Orchestra Auditions @ Gilbert HS
Wednesday, April 8, 2026	<b>An Evening at the Symphony</b> tickets available to <b>Parents</b>
Wednesday, April 15, 2026	<b>An Evening at the Symphony</b> tickets available to Public
Tuesday, April 28, 2026	<b>Annual End of the Year Celebration</b> <b>All Orchestra Students and their Parents</b> 6:30 p.m. HHS Crystal Ballroom
Friday, May 8, 2026	“ <b>An Evening at the Symphony</b> ” & Senior Night – HHS Auditorium 6:00 p.m. – <b>Concert Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra, Starlight Serenade</b> 7:30 p.m. – <b>Starlight Serenade, Sinfonia, Symphony, United Sound</b>
Thursday, May 14, 2026	<b>Symphony Orchestra</b> Baccalaureate Rehearsal- Auditorium 6:00-7:30 p.m.
Sunday, May 17, 2026	Baccalaureate- HHS Auditorium <b>Symphony Orchestra</b> <b>Call Time - 12:00 p.m. <u>TWO SHOWS</u> - 1:00 p.m. &amp; 3:00 p.m.</b>

***STARLIGHT SERENADE PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE  
FIRST & SECOND SEMESTER 2025 - 2026***

---

Saturday, September 20, 2025	<b><i>Starlight Serenade</i></b> - National Anthem @ HHS MB Comp. Call time: 5:00 p.m
Thursday, October 30, 2025	<b><i>Starlight Serenade</i></b> - National Anthem @ HHS Football Game Call time: 5:45 p.m.
Wednesday, November 12, 2025	<b><i>Starlight Serenade</i></b> - Gilbert Community Excellence Awards Call time: 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday, December 3, 2025	<b><i>Sym. Strings/Starlight Serenade</i></b> @ Valle del Oro RV Resort Call time: 3:00 p.m.      Performance: 6:30 p.m.
Monday, December 8, 2025	<b><i>Starlight Serenade</i></b> - Elementary School Tour (Time TBD)
Monday, January 5, 2026	<b><i>Starlight Serenade</i></b> Rehearsal 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Tuesday, January 13, 2026	<b><i>Starlight Serenade</i></b> @ Sunland Village East Call time 5:15 p.m.
Tuesday, January 20, 2026	<b><i>Starlight Serenade</i></b> @ Viewpoint RV Resort Call time: 5:15 p.m.
Monday & Tuesday, January 26 & 27, 2026	<b><i>Starlight Serenade</i></b> @ 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade String Festival #1 & #2 Call time: 6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, February 3, 2026	<b><i>Starlight Serenade</i></b> @ Sunland Village Call time: 5:15 p.m.
Thursday, February 5, 2026	<b><i>Starlight Serenade</i></b> @ Mesa Regal Call time: 5:15 p.m.
Tuesday, February 10, 2026	Valentine Dinner Performance/Fund-Raiser at Highland HS “Crystal Ballroom” <b>6:00 – 9:00 pm</b>
Tuesday, February 17, 2026	<b><i>Starlight Serenade</i></b> @ The Resort Call time: 5:15 p.m.
Friday, May 8, 2026	<b><i>Starlight Serenade</i></b> final rehearsal 6:30 – 7:25 a.m.

***\*Additional performances may be scheduled throughout the year***