

# Northwestern Middle School Orchestra Spring Concert

Thursday May 18th, 2023, 7:00 PM

## PROGRAM NOTES

Thank you so much for coming to our performance tonight. Because an audience can be quite distracting for young musicians, please remain seated during our performance. If you must enter or exit, wait until applause or between groups rather than walking across the “stage” while we are playing. Feel free to record or take pictures, but please do not block other guests’ view of the performance, and make sure your phone is silenced. Small children should be escorted out if they become restless/noisy. Thank you for helping with concert etiquette this evening!

Tonight, our performance is a side-by-side concert, meaning all students are expected to stay for the duration, all three grade levels. This concert is going to last approximately an hour and 5 minutes.

The Sixth Grade Orchestra begins with **Star Dancer** by Mark Williams. The Lydian mode and rhythmic open string double stops give this piece an outer space feel. Each section has the melody in this piece. The orchestra will balance the accompaniment versus the main line and demonstrates contrasting dynamics.

Next, sixth graders will perform the peaceful **Canyon Sunset** by John Caponegro. This piece develops slowly and lyrically, with a “poco agitato” section in the middle. Students have legato bowing and rubato in this lovely piece.

**Frog in a Tree** by Edmund Siennicki is our most upbeat piece. The rhythm at the beginning matches the title and the style evokes old time country fiddlin’ music. Some students will stand and play the special tag at the end.

The Sixth Grade Orchestra concludes with our signature piece, **Dragonhunter**. Richard Meyer is Mrs. Champion’s favorite composer for young orchestras, so you may notice several of his pieces on our program. Mr. Meyer started

the “Giving Bach” program <https://www.givingbach.org/> and has conducted the GMEA Middle School All State Orchestra recently.

The Seventh Grade Orchestra begins with a rhythmic jazz/blues piece called **Blue Rhythmico** by Kirt Mosier. The upper strings will shift up into position and play double stops. The lower strings have a glissando and the piece concludes with a *molto ritardando* and drum solo.

Next the seventh graders will perform **Ridin’ the Rails**, by Richard Meyer. This piece cleverly combines references to the Underground Railroad with the African American spiritual *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*, first presented in a low range by the violas and cellos. Listen for the “chugga chugga” of the train wheels and its whistle.

At this time, some seventh grade violinists will switch seats in order to be seated with their section. Violins should make up approximately half of the orchestra and are divided into two parts: first violin and second violin. In general, the first violin part has more melody and usually a higher range that requires shifting out of first position. The second violin part usually has more harmony notes closer to the viola range. Sometimes violinists are assigned their part based on strength of skills and sometimes they are allowed to choose.

The Seventh Grade Orchestra concludes with **Legend of the Ghost Stallion**, also by Richard Meyer. This ode to the Wild West begins with a mysterious and eerie introduction using the folk song “All the Pretty Little Horses.” Listen for lyrical solos and then the *allegro tempo* as the ghost stallion gallops through the moonlit countryside. Students are working hard on matching bow placement near the tip for soft sections and closer to the frog on loud sections.

*At this time, we will have a very brief awards/recognition ceremony.*

The Eighth Grade Orchestra begins with an arrangement of **Bohemian Rhapsody** which was recorded by Queen in 1975. This song was

written by Freddie Mercury and is a suite which has an introduction, a ballad, an operatic section, a hard rock section, and then a sentimental coda. It is one of the most popular songs of all time.

The next piece the eighth graders will perform is called **Plink, Plank, Plunk!** written by Leroy Anderson in 1951. This piece is entirely pizzicato so you may notice that students put down their bows. Plink, Plank, Plunk! features whimsical harmonies and funny sound effects. Mr. Anderson was a bassist, so he incorporated the top “sounds students want to make on their instruments” into this piece: sliding, squeaking, and snapping. Leroy Anderson is most famous for his holiday piece called “Sleigh Ride” that features the crack of a horse whip and the “neigh” at the end.

The Eighth Grade Orchestra will conclude with Ted Allen’s **Fire in the Forge**, a blazing fast speed metal piece. Speed metal is a sub-genre of heavy metal music that originated in the late 1970’s. It is described by AllMusic as “extremely fast, abrasive, and technically demanding music.” This piece requires so much energy, we have to stand up!

It has been my joy to teach these eighth graders for three years, both online and in person. They are extremely talented and resilient, and I wish them the best as they move on to high school.

Thank you all for coming tonight and for supporting your child’s music education throughout the year.

Mrs. Champion

\*If you are able, please help return equipment to the orchestra room and throw away any papers left behind. Thank you!