

AMIS Honor Orchestras

Audition Information & Instructions

String players in grades 6 through 9 are invited to audition for the Junior Honor Orchestra.

String players in grades 9 through 13 are invited to audition for the Senior Honor Orchestra.

Ninth grade students should choose, with the help of their teachers, whether to audition for the Junior or the Senior orchestra. Ninth graders may send in only one audition and will be considered only for the specific orchestra for which they audition; they will not be considered for Junior orchestra if their audition for Senior orchestra is unsuccessful. Students who play both the violin and viola may only send in one audition. Auditioning students should be fully enrolled members of their school orchestra if there is one and in good standing with the music department at their schools.

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING THE AUDITION

1. **Be sure to use the correct set of audition materials.** There are four sets of materials which are used in rotation as follows:

Set A – for festivals held in spring 2008 and spring 2012

Set B – for festivals held in spring 2009 and spring 2013

Set C – for festivals held in spring 2010 and spring 2014

Set D – for festivals held in spring 2011 and spring 2015

* Note that there is no longer a distinction between partial and full auditions; all students will record all the scales in order followed by the excerpt. Also, JHO violinists should not record another piece to audition for 1st chair.

2. Start preparing early, working closely with your teacher. Use the metronome while you practice.
3. All scales, exercises and excerpts have a required tempo. Follow all instructions on the audition materials regarding use of the metronome.
4. Please use all printed bowings.
5. Printed dynamics must be observed. Further dynamics may be added to enhance phrasing.
6. Printed fingerings for Junior auditions are required. Printed fingerings for Senior auditions are optional, to be treated as suggestions.
7. Use vibrato whenever appropriate. Specifically, use vibrato on the minor scale.
8. All students must record the music in the numerical order of scales and excerpt specified on the audition paper.
9. Most excerpts in the audition material are from standard repertoire, identified by name and composer. Students are encouraged to listen to recordings of the works to aid audition preparation.

GUIDELINES FOR MAKING RECORDINGS

- The Room

Choose a room far from street noise that is not too live. An echo camouflages articulation and nuance. Record auditions in a room with dry acoustics. Above all, do not add reverberation. Please ensure that there are no background noises from fans, air conditioners, computers, etc. that may detract from the sound.

- Recording Equipment

Set the level during a trial recording. **DO NOT CHANGE THE VOLUME LEVEL DURING THE RECORDING.** If your recorder adjusts volume automatically while the student is playing, **DO NOT USE IT.** We need to judge dynamics played by the performer. The preferred recorded media is CD's.

- Microphone Placement

The performer and metronome should be approximately 3 feet (1 meter) away from the microphone. The microphone should be directed toward the performer. Experiment with a few different placements. This takes only a short time with each pupil. Listen and trust your ears. If the result is too soft, move closer to the microphone; if distorted, move away.

- Metronome

Lower pitched metronomes are easier to record. The metronome tone should be the same throughout the audition. Please turn off the multi pitch function (bell, click) so that each click sounds the same. Listen to make sure that the metronome is clearly audible. Follow the instructions on the audition music concerning starting and stopping the metronome. Metronome markings must be followed. Auditions beginning at a slower tempo will be rejected.

- Making the Recording

It takes two people to make a recording; one to run the equipment/metronome and one to play the audition.

- Organization of the CD

For each orchestra (JHO or SHO) all auditions for each instrument should be on one CD. Please record each item for each student on a separate track: one track per scale, one track for the excerpt. Please do not speak your name or school on the recording.

SUBMITTING THE RECORDINGS

- **PLEASE LISTEN TO ALL RECORDINGS BEFORE SENDING THEM.** Then listen again on a different machine to make sure that it plays. Each year, several auditions are rejected because there was no sound on the recording.

- Screen your auditions. If the standard of the audition is obviously not sufficient for an advanced orchestra, do not send the recording.

- Register your entries on the AMIS website where you found these instructions. Follow fully all instructions on this form. When you receive the email receipt from AMIS, print out a hard copy and include it with your audition CD's. **IT IS A REQUIREMENT THAT A HARD COPY OF THE EMAIL RECEIPT MUST BE SENT WITH YOUR AUDITIONS.**

- Be extremely careful about labeling the recordings. Follow AMIS guidelines found on your audition music. It is especially important to label CDs with your school's number found on the AMIS website. For example, if your school number is 99, the CDs would be labeled: JHO Violas 99 or SHO Basses 99.

- **PACK THE RECORDINGS CAREFULLY.** CD's in a compact package, surrounded by cardboard and then placed in a bubble wrap bag arrive in better shape than those spread out in a padded envelope.

- Auditions from outside the EU should be clearly marked: "Educational Material -NO COMMERCIAL VALUE" to avoid customs duties. (This usually means that you cannot insure the package because to insure it you must assign a value.) The individual schools must cover the cost of postage and duties.

• **MAKE SURE THAT THE RECORDINGS ARRIVE ON TIME. PLEASE** allow extra mailing time so that the recordings arrive before the due date listed on the AMIS web site under “Latest Festival Information”.

Send submissions to:

Georgia Bassett, Executive Consultant

AMIS

Church farm House

North Lopham, Diss

Norfolk IP22 2LP, England

So that you know what happens after you have recorded your audition, here is a brief description.

LISTENING PROCESS

o The recordings are heard anonymously, one section at a time. Recordings from the various schools are mixed and heard randomly.

o At the end of each scale and excerpt the performance is rated by the committee. This grade is the average of grades that are awarded for tone quality, intonation, bow control, steadiness, shifting, vibrato, rhythm, phrasing and dynamics. Finally the grades for all scales and excerpts are added together to give the performer a numerical rating.

o Please note that poor intonation on scales results in immediate rejection. Unfortunately every year several auditions are rejected on this basis so please prepare them carefully.

o The committee strives to be accurate and fair in their decisions. At certain intervals a recording already graded will, unannounced, be played again so that the accuracy of the evaluation process can be determined. If the number rating of the re-evaluated audition is far different from the original rating, the whole section of recordings is re-evaluated.

The total process takes a minimum of three days, 13 to 15 hours each day. It is very intense, but rewarding and interesting. It is also very stressful. Poorly recorded auditions cause the greatest stress! Points cannot be awarded if the audition cannot be clearly heard.

Honor Orchestra is an exciting process beginning with the preparation and recording of auditions and concluding with a terrific concert at the festival. Your students deserve the best possible chance from the beginning! Please follow the guidelines!

Best luck with the recordings!