

Simi Valley High School Instrumental Music Department Chamber Music: Solo & Ensemble

It is that time of the year again when all instrumental music students will perform chamber music in a solo and ensemble concert and some may also perform at a festival. Students will be in charge of selecting their own groups to perform in, as well as the repertoire (some restrictions apply) that will be performed. There will be deadlines to meet in terms of when you need to select your groups, as well as when musical selection(s) should be confirmed, in addition to performance checkpoints.

Due to time constraints and venue availability, we will have to limit our evening solo and ensemble concert to select groups, and will not be doing a full evening chamber music concert this year. Instead, some of the soloists and ensembles will be performing during their respective class periods and at lunch. We will do our best to live stream the performances during the day so that supporters can tune in to watch any groups of their choice.

Mr. Schuster is hosting a NON-JUDGED solo and ensemble day at Valley View Middle School, on Saturday, April 18, 2020. You are welcome to sign up when he opens the registration, and you may use that as a preliminary performance before we do our solo and ensemble day in class in mid May. SCSBOA offers other judged solo and ensemble venues; however, most of those are not in our vicinity. Visit the SCSBOA website if you are interested in performing in a judged solo and ensemble festival. Understand you will need to register and pay any applicable fees that SCSBOA and the festival host require.

The Solo & Ensemble component will count toward a large portion of your final grade at the end of the semester, so it is best to begin working on getting all of your materials and logistics together now.

Please read below so that you understand how this unit of study will work:

Solo or Ensemble Entry Requirements

- If performing in an ensemble, the group may only consist of students who are enrolled in band and/or orchestra at our school.
- If you choose to form an ensemble with students from another instrumental music class, you will need to devise a rehearsal schedule and rehearsal site that allows everyone to have rehearsal time together.
 - Limited rehearsal time will be given during class.
- Must play on a concert band/wind ensemble, string orchestra, jazz, and concert percussion instruments. No marching instruments (i.e. Mellophones, sousaphones, marching baritones/euphoniums, marching battery) will be permitted.
- Students must play on their primary instrument (the instrument they play in their respective school day ensemble). If you wish to play a secondary instrument, you may do so on another piece if you are involved in an additional ensemble, or a solo.
- You may only be involved in two entries. This means you may play a solo and be in an ensemble, or you may be in two ensembles. Or, you can do two solos. This is geared to help you focus on fewer pieces, and mastering one or two so that you can be well prepared.
- If you are in multiple classes, you will need to do one chamber piece per class on the primary instrument you play for that class.
- If performing an entry other than a solo, **groups must be confirmed by January 24, 2020 or sooner**. After that date, you will not be permitted to change groups. **Pieces should be selected by February 14, 2020 or sooner**. This will give you time to begin the rehearsal process.
- If you do something other than a solo, think carefully about whom you ask to be in your group. The entire group will earn the grade you receive. Some people will put in more effort and work up the parts, while others may not. You will all share the responsibility of making sure your group is stage ready.
- All soloists/ensemble groups must provide a copy of the score for each piece/movement being performed.

Musical Selection Requirements

- Must perform music from the standard repertoire of any era Middle Ages, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Contemporary, Jazz, or world music (non-Western) genres (no pep tunes, pop music, movie/musical soundtracks, etc.). In other words, the music should be festival appropriate.
 - Consult with Mr. Smith before selecting on your repertoire. This will ensure the music is appropriate for the solo and ensemble or not.
- Do not find a piece on Noteflight or MuseScore and use that as your repertoire. Find music that is already published by a known publishing company or composer/arranger. Often times, Noteflight and MuseScore arrangements will not have important details on the music, it is often general with simply supplying the notes and rhythms.
- You may re-arrange or re-write parts of any published piece to fit the instrumentation of your group. For example, if you are doing a duet, but it's written for two flutes, and you want to do that same piece for clarinet and oboe, etc. you will need to transpose the parts, and possibly alter some of the ranges. Music notation software such as Noteflight would be ideal for this, as it will automatically transpose when you copy and paste. You will want to start arranging/re-writes sooner rather than later so that you are not missing out on valuable practice time.

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- Sometimes you can find music written for specific instruments (i.e. 2 Bb clarinets), and then have two trumpets play the parts (provided the ranges are applicable, some arranging might need to happen). Or you can have two Eb, C, or F instruments play the part, understanding the piece will sound in a different key than if two Bb instruments played it. Another example: if there is a piece for three flutes, and you have two oboes and a flute, you could play the piece as is in terms of key, but might have to adjust range of notes here and there. You will need to be creative with how you form groups, and the way you work out the music.
- If you are performing in an ensemble such as a duet, there should be two distinct parts; two people playing one (unison) part for the performance will not count as a duet. The same applies for other ensembles. There should be a variety of parts heard if there are multiple players.
- Your musical selection(s) (per solo/group) should be a minimum of 3 minutes, and no more than 7 minutes total. If doing a multi-movement piece, you may have to omit a movement if the full piece goes over the allotted time.
- There should be at least one technical movement/piece and one lyrical movement/piece, whether or not you are doing a solo or ensemble. Some pieces/movements will have a lyrical and technical section with the one piece or movement.
- There are several resources (many are free) online where you can find solo, duet, trio, quartet, etc. music. Most solo and ensemble music is less expensive than full band/orchestra music, but can range from \$1-\$50 (plus shipping). Try to find options where you can buy and e-print online.
- Repertoire selected should match the level of performer/group. Meaning, do not pick selections that are too easy, but also do not pick repertoire that you know you and/or the group will not be able to achieve musically by the date of performance.
 - Part of your evaluation will be, “appropriateness of music” which is relative to the level of the performer(s), and the style of music. Definitely pick repertoire that will push you as a performer, as part of playing in small groups is expanding your abilities as a student and musician.
- The instrumental music program does not provide accompanists. Students will need to secure their own accompanist, and may use any piano accompanist, whether or not they are enrolled in our program. Students are responsible for any fees their accompanist may require.
 - Students will not be penalized if they choose to perform their piece without an accompanist.
 - It is suggested you perform a solo or piece that is specifically written acapela (music without instrumental accompaniment) if you do not have an accompanist.
- Percussionists may not use music from the instructor led percussion ensemble as their ensemble, but may create other groups and will need to choose music from outside the repertoire used in the ensemble led by instructors.

Preparation and Performance Process

- **Preparation** (sectionals/rehearsals, music marked, re-writes done in time if needed, etc.).
 - Throughout this chamber music preparation process, you (soloist) and/or members of your group (ensemble) will be asked periodically to show your progress by playing excerpts of your selected repertoire, showing marked up music, and you will be asked to report on how much time has been spent on the repertoire (this will be evident in how it is performed, too).
- **Performance** (stage presence, tone, intonation, tempi, rhythmic interpretation, dynamics, phrasing, musicality, appropriateness of repertoire, etc.).
 - For the live performance, ensembles will perform during class for their peers. If your ensemble has students from other class periods, your group will be required to perform during lunch.
 - All performances will be judged on similar criteria to an adjudicated band festival.

Helpful suggestions

- Listen to recordings of your pieces, study the score, and or sight-read through several pieces before settling on what you will perform.
- Do not wait until a couple weeks or a few days before to start working on your repertoire. That type of practice does not yield successful results. Many of you have likely been in that situation before, and know firsthand how difficult it was to perform, as you felt embarrassed during the performance. If you are performing in ensemble(s), you should plan to meet with your group(s) at least 1-2 times per week (if not more), depending on the level of work you need to put in.
- Think about how much time you can practice each week, and what level and amount of music you can realistically achieve with that amount of rehearsal time.
 - If you are a student who knows up front they are not going to put in the time to produce a stage ready performance, do not join a group with musicians who are more committed. It is unfair to those students when someone does not have their parts learned.
 - Consider doing a solo performance where only you will be affected by your habits, or join a group with musicians who share the efforts as yourself.
- Record yourselves and listen to how you sound. Follow the score as you listen, and see if you can hear what you see.
 - If you hear yourself out of tone, tune, rhythm, lacking in phrasing, dynamic contrast, etc., chances are your audience (including adjudicators) will not be as moved by the performance.
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Check In/Preparation Grade Scale

A	B	C	D	F
40-36	35-32	31-28	27-24	23-20
The soloist or ensemble demonstrates magnificent preparation at the checkpoint. All sheet music is marked (very detailed), and all members can articulate on the rehearsal process up to that point, as well as sharing goals for further checkpoints.	The soloist or ensemble demonstrates excellent preparation at the checkpoint. Most sheet music is marked with details, but could use additional markings, and most of the members can articulate on the rehearsal process up to that point, as well as sharing goals for future checkpoints.	The soloist or ensemble demonstrates reasonable preparation checkpoint. Some sheet music is marked with details, but could use additional markings, and there may be a few members who are unable to articulate on the rehearsal process up to that point, as well as sharing goals for future checkpoints.	The soloist or ensemble demonstrates minimal preparation at the checkpoint. Some sheet music is marked, but it is minimal and does not address the details. Most of the members are not unable to articulate on the rehearsal process up to that point, nor can they share goals for future checkpoints.	The soloist or ensemble demonstrates very little preparation at the checkpoint. Little to no sheet music is marked, and does not address details. All of the members are unable to articulate on the rehearsal process up to that point, nor can address goals for future checkpoints.
Final Performance				
100-90	89-80	79-70	69-60	59-50
The soloist or group presents a performance that is significantly prepared above and beyond the norm. Outside practice time is evident.	The soloist or group presents a performance that is mostly prepared for this level, and stage ready. Outside practice time is mostly evident.	The soloist or group presents a performance that is somewhat prepared for this level, but lacks consistency. Outside practice time is somewhat evident.	The soloist or group presents a performance that displays minimal preparation for this level. There seems to be minimal evidence of efficient outside practice time.	The soloist or group presents a performance that lacks preparation for this level. There seems to be no evidence of efficient outside practice time.

Final Performance Score Sheet

Repertoire/Content (What?)	+ = Area of strength	✓ = Area needing improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the repertoire appropriate for this event? • Is the repertoire appropriate for the level performer(s)? • Is the repertoire effective/engaging? • Is there contrast within the style(s) presented in the composition? • Did the performers arrange/re-write parts acceptable for the instrumentation of the group? • Etc. 		/100
Performance/Achievement (How?)	+ = Area of strength	✓ = Area needing improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does/do the performer(s) play with characteristic tone? • Does/do the performer(s) play with centered pitch? • Does/do the performers(s) play with correct rhythmic interpretation? • Does/do the performer(s) play with pulse control and nuance where applicable? • Does/do the performer(s) use a wide dynamic pallet? • Does/do the performer(s) play with phrasing and expression? • If playing in an ensemble, are the parts well balanced and blended? • Can you hear the melodic versus harmonic/accompaniment? • Etc. 		/100
Additional Comments		TOTAL SCORE /200

Checkpoints schedule (each solo/group will check in on one of the two days listed in each box below).

February 20-21	March 5-6	March 19-20	April 2-3	April 16-17
April 30-May 1	Solo & Ensemble Final Performances: Thursday, May 21, 2020 (date may change)			

You must check in each time to receive credit. There will be no make-ups for checkpoints due to groups not being prepared.