

CHELMSFORD HIGH SCHOOL
HONORS BAND
HANDBOOK

updated September 2018

CHECKLIST

HONORS PORTFOLIO (WRITTEN WORK)

Rehearsal warm ups

Program notes

Winter Concert

Spring Concert

Pops Concert

Written Materials (One Per Semester)

Live Music Performance Review (required)

Live Music Performance Review (option #1)

Album Review (option #2, must be approved by director)

Symphonic Band repertoire persuasive essay (option #3)

Jury

Semester 1

Semester 2

Prepare the Northeast District Festival audition

REHEARSAL WARM-UPS

All honors students will be required to lead one 10- to 15-minute class warm-up per semester. Dates will be assigned for each student. Please note these important rolling due dates: Students will electronically submit a written plan two school days before their scheduled warm-up. A written, reflective self-evaluation is due the school day following the warm-up. Late submissions will be marked down.

WARM UP PLAN – Due Two Days Prior

Briefly outline your warm-up. Each category needs to be represented in your warm-up, and your warm-up should be relevant to the music that we are preparing.

For each exercise, make note of the following:

what is its purpose?

what note or key will you start on?

Categories:

Breathing Gym (see next page)

Tuning

Scale exercises

SELF EVALUATION – Due the Day After

For each of the following prompts, write a few sentences evaluating your teaching experience.

A warm-up prepares the Band and sets the tone for the day's rehearsal. What was one specific way that you aimed to do this?

In instrumental/musical terms: how did the Band respond to your warm-up? Describe their sound.

What was challenging or unexpected about the experience? If you were warming up again tomorrow, how would you address this?

Do you feel that you accomplished your goal(s) for this warm-up? Why or why not?

What is one specific way that you can develop your skill as a warm-up leader?

BREATHING GYM OUTLINE

for a 5-minute warm-up

- I. Tension-release
- II. Stretches (choose two, don't forget to incorporate deep breathing)
 - A. Trunk Twist
 - B. Two Way Stretch
 - C. Wrist Grab
 - D. Elbow Grab
 - E. Whole Body Stretch (interlock fingers behind back)
- III. Strength & Flexibility (choose one)
 - A. 5-15-5 (inhale for 5, sip 15 on top, exhale for 5)
 - B. "Let It Leak" 6, 5, 4 counts
 - C. Power Breathing (inhale/exhale 1&1, 1&2)
 - D. In-Sip-Sip, Out-Push-Push
- IV. "EE to OH"
- V. Flow Studies (choose one)
 - A. 6-7-8-9-10
 - B. Shorten the inhale/exhale (4, 2, 1, 1/2 counts)
 - C. Lengthen the inhale/exhale (4, 8, 12, 16 counts)

Program Notes

All Honors students will submit program notes for one of our pieces prior to a concert. Program notes are a short essay about a piece of music. They should include detailed information about the composer, arranger (if applicable), and piece. Your goal is to increase your audience's understanding and enjoyment of the music you are performing. Program notes should be as well researched as any other piece of writing you produce. Include note-worthy items, such as a dedication or an excerpt of a review that was published soon after the piece's premiere to show how the work was received at the time. You might choose to write about the piece's historical context, musical style, scoring, or things to listen for. Consider your audience and gear your notes toward their level of understanding. Exemplary student work will be featured in the concert program. Since program notes are written for a concert, on-time submission is important. Late work will be marked down each day, with maximum of half credit allowed after the publication of the concert program.

Gustav Holst

"The Planets," Suite for large orchestra, Opus 32

GUSTAV HOLST was born—Gustavus Theodore von Holst—in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, England, on September 21, 1874, and died in London on May 25, 1934. He composed "The Planets" in London and Thaxted, Suffolk, between 1914 and 1916, beginning with "Mars" (though before the outbreak of war in August), continuing with "Venus" and "Jupiter" that fall, writing "Saturn," "Uranus," and "Neptune" in 1915, and finishing with "Mercury" in 1916. The first performances were private, one of a two-piano arrangement made and played by Vally Lasker and Norah Day (Holst's assistants at St. Paul's School, where he was music master), and the other by the Queen's Hall Orchestra under Adrian Boult on September 29, 1918. "Venus" was performed for the first time, along with "Mercury" and "Jupiter," in London on November 22, 1919, with the composer conducting, and the first performance of the complete suite took place in London on November 15, 1920, conducted by Albert Coates.

THE SCORE OF "THE PLANETS" calls for four flutes, two piccolos, bass flute, three oboes, bass oboe, English horn, three clarinets, bass clarinet, three bassoons, contrabassoon, six horns, four trumpets, three trombones, tenor tuba, bass tuba, six timpani, triangle, side drum, tambourine, cymbals, bass drum, gong, bells, glockenspiel, celesta, xylophone, two harps, organ, strings, and (in the last movement) six-part women's chorus.

In his early years Holst went under the full name Gustav von Holst, but he was entirely English in his upbringing, as were his father and grandfather. His closest friend was Ralph Vaughan Williams, and his fondness for English folksong is clear from such pieces as his Somerset Rhapsody and Moorside Suite. But he was also fascinated by remote cultures and occult beliefs. He studied Sanskrit and Hindu literature, and his choice of texts for operas and songs was astonishingly wide. His range of musical activities was wide too, being composer, arranger, conductor, and full-time schoolteacher all his life. He managed to find time to write an immense quantity of music in different forms, skirting the traditional categories of symphony, sonata, and string quartet, and instead making unconventional groups of pieces on unconventional subjects.

A suite of seven tone poems on the astrological implications of the planets was an inspired conception of this kind, which came to him partly from an ambition to write more orchestral music on the lines of his "oriental" suite Beni-Mora, completed in 1910, partly (perhaps) in imitation of Schoenberg's Five Pieces for Orchestra which he had heard in 1912, and partly from reading *What is a Horoscope and How is it Cast* by Alan Leo, recently published. First performed at the end of hostilities in 1918, the ferocious imagery of Mars, Bringer of War, was assumed to have been written in response to the battlefield carnage, when in fact it was sketched out in the summer of 1914, before war was declared. It thus belongs to that significant body of aggressive orchestral music by European composers that seemed to prefigure the violence soon to be unleashed.

Mars was the first movement to be composed, and if Holst at one time planned to present the seven planets in the obvious order, beginning with Mercury, the closest to the sun, and ending with Neptune, then thought to be the furthest planet in the solar system, he settled instead on a sequence that leads from the grim physicality of mortal combat via the intervening planets to Neptune's disembodied mystical universe. Mercury was moved to third place, where a scherzo would normally be found in a symphony. There is naturally no movement for Pluto, which was not then known to exist (and is now in any case demoted from planetary status).

Venus and Jupiter were also composed in 1914, with Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune in 1915 and Mercury, the last to be written, in 1916. Opportunities for performing such a large work were limited in the war years, but thanks to Balfour Gardiner, a generous benefactor to English musicians and himself a composer, Holst was able to hear a private run-through, skimpily rehearsed, in September 1918, and the full work publicly performed for the first time in November 1920. (Balfour Gardiner's great-nephew, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, has in his turn made a fine recording of the work.) Holst always resisted performances of individual movements, but was powerless to prevent the popularity of certain sections, notably Jupiter, whose broad tune he allowed to be issued as a hymn to the words "I vow to thee, my country."

Mars was the Greek god of war, but Holst was not trying just to reflect the mythological characters of the Greek gods after whom the planets are named. He was also interested in their astrology, to which Alan Leo's book guided him. The battle imagery of Mars is unmistakable, made grotesque by insistent drumbeats and the 5/4 meter, and building again and again to brutal climaxes on huge dissonant chords. The organ adds its powerful voice to the uproar.

Mythology associates Venus more with love than with peace, while astrology endows those born under this planet with a refined nature and deep devotion to those they love. Following directly after Mars, Venus inevitably delivers peace, but also explores serenity, beauty, and delicate quietude, aided by the sounds of glockenspiel, celesta, and harps.

Mercury, the Winged Messenger, moves swiftly and nimbly, and a "mercurial" character emerges from the interplay of instruments and the brilliance of the woodwinds. A symphonic scherzo in form, it contains a Trio in which a melody (which might have come from Borodin) is heard on a solo violin and then, unchanged, a dozen times more in different orchestral dress each time.

Jupiter brings jollity and much else besides. Enthusiasm, manly energy, lopsided acrobatics, peasant merrymaking, nobility, and grandeur—these all seem to have a place in this movement, with its broad tune in the middle evoking Elgar's world. Leo attributed to Jupiter's sons "an abundance of life and vitality. Those born under its influence are cheery and hopeful in disposition, and possess a noble and generous spirit. They possess that true religious spirit which gives faith, and abundant hope." All this and more is contained in this rich, generous movement.

Saturn, said to have been Holst's favorite movement, is the longest in the suite. The orchestration is highly imaginative, with the three flutes and harp harmonics treading painfully forward while the double basses stir in the depths. The bass oboe adds its unusual voice. Old age is represented as slow and steady, but not necessarily in a negative sense. The melodic fragments are highly expressive and the balance of the movement is profoundly satisfying.

Holst's attribution of magic powers to Uranus seems to have been his own fanciful gloss on the strange, erratic character associated with that planet. Thumping timpani, galumphing bassoons, swirling piccolos, and a humorous march certainly add up to a lovable eccentricity and a remarkably inventive piece of music, as if performed...by magic.

With Neptune, the Mystic, Holst comes to the psychological heart of his planetary journey. The 5/4 meter may be an echo of Mars, but the stillness of the music and the delicacy of its orchestration paint a quite different world. The supreme invention was to call for an invisible choir of female voices, which fade to nothing like a dot of light disappearing into the infinite darkness of space.

Hugh Macdonald

WRITTEN MATERIALS

All Honors students will submit a written paper for Semester 1 and 2. It is the students' choice as to which paper is submitted for which semester.

1. Students must see a performance of a musician at the collegiate level or higher. You are to write a one-page reflection of the performance, and might want to comment on such factors as:

Intonation

Balance

Blend

Musical sensitivity (dynamics, phrasing, expression, tempo control)

Perceived preparation by the group - do they sound confident and prepared? Why or why not?

Professionalism exhibited through their appearance, posture, and decorum.

Please submit your paper electronically before or on the date of your jury.

2. Students may choose from the following options to fulfill their second writing assignment:

- Album review - The album must be approved by the instructor - see Mr. Sexauer well in advance for approval.
- Another outside performance, collegiate level or higher.
- Symphonic Band repertoire persuasive essay

LIVE MUSIC PERFORMANCE REVIEW RUBRIC

Introduction

- _____ Artist or group is properly identified (1 point)
- _____ Performance venue and title is properly identified (1 point)
- _____ Introduction give some context for the artist's body of work: who are they, what are they known for? (1 point)

Main Body

- _____ Specific titles and composers are referenced (1 point)
- _____ Language is vividly/adequately/vaguely descriptive (3/2/1 points)
- _____ Five musical vocabulary words are used correctly (1 point each)

Conclusion

- _____ Reviewer's position on the performance is clearly/vaguely stated (2/1 points)
- _____ Review contains no/few/many spelling errors (3/2/1 points)
- _____ Review contains no/few/many grammatical errors (3/2/1 points)

JURIES

All Honors students will perform a jury during midterm and final exam weeks. Students will prepare a piece of solo music to perform for the performance music faculty. Students will be assessed using the Massachusetts All-State rubric. This grade will be averaged with the student's written exam grade to determine their mid-year or final exam grade.

Sign-ups for jury times will be posted in the music hallway in the weeks prior to exam week. Students may select a seven-minute time slot. Students are advised to show up at least fifteen minutes early to warm up and mentally prepare for the jury. Students must provide three copies of their jury music for faculty to follow along.

Music must be at the same level and genre that a student would encounter in a district or all-state audition. Arrangements of popular music will not be accepted.

DISTRICT FESTIVAL AUDITIONS

All Honors students will be required to audition for either the MMEA Senior (grades 9-12) or Junior (grade 7-9) Northeast District Festival. These are annual festivals that bring together high-level musicians from all over northeastern Massachusetts to prepare a concert. Please note that it is the responsibility of the student to learn their audition music, and it is extremely recommended that they be studying with a private instructor. District festival auditions include a prepared piece of music, scales, and sight reading. Students who are accepted into the top 50% of their section in the Senior District festival are given a recommendation to audition for a seat in the All-State ensembles.

Information on audition materials and requirements can be found at www.northeasterndistrict.org. Please direct questions or concerns to Mr. Sexauer.