



May 7, 2024

Dear Middle School Parents and Students:

Each year Middle School students and their parents are asked to make a choice from the music course selections. Detailed music course descriptions are provided below.

Please make your choice thoughtfully. Please make your selection by *Wednesday, May 15, 2024*. A change in your child's selection after June 30, 2024, may not be possible because of class size and staffing constraints.

-MUSIC FOR CREDIT- Course Description

General Music

The Grade 6 General Music course covers fundamental music elements and materials. Students will explore basic music theory terminology, discover orchestral instruments, and delve into rhythm, melody, harmony, and timbre concepts. Additionally, students will participate in units centered on starting African Drum Circle and Piano activities. The Piano segment allows students to learn at their own pace, with diverse resources catering to varying piano proficiency levels within the class section.

The Form I General Music course comprises two sections: Musical Form and Music History. In this course, students delve into music's structure and significant historical milestones. They will showcase a final project related to music history. Additionally, students will advance their skills in African Drum Circle techniques and build upon their piano knowledge from the prior year. New students will also have the chance to participate in these activities at a beginning level.

The Form II General Music course is structured into three main sections: 20th Century Music, Acoustics, and American Popular Music. Students will explore 20th-century composition methods and produce compositions from that era using Garage Band. They will delve into the four properties of sound and their impact on different musical performance environments. The course also covers the evolution of American pop music throughout the country's diverse musical heritage. Moreover, students will engage in African Drum Circle and Piano activities, with new students having the opportunity to join these activities at an introductory level.

Chorus 6-7-8

This course emphasizes vocal performance and multi-part ensemble singing. In chorus vocal technique, expressive singing, harmony singing, basic music theory, and reading are focused on. Students are also included in choosing repertoire and are often asked to participate in creating arrangements. Previous formal training is not required to enroll in chorus, but at a minimum, the student must be able to match pitches played on the piano. Participation in school concerts and Closing Exercises is **required**, and a limited number of community events may also count toward the student's grade.

Concert Band 6-7-8

This course emphasizes instrumental performance and ensemble playing. Students are required to have experience playing a wind, brass, or percussion instrument as well as music notation reading skills. Advanced piano players are invited to audition for the Concert Band to be the piano accompanist for the group. Students are also expected to practice their music outside of class. Each student's grade will reflect the amount of improvement they show during each grading period and throughout the school year. Participation in school concerts and Closing Exercises is **required**, and a limited number of community events may also count toward the student's grade.

String Ensemble 6-7-8

String Ensemble is a performance-based course that allows students experienced in violin, viola, cello, or bass violin to practice and perform as a string ensemble. Students should have experience playing an orchestral string instrument as listed above and possess basic note-reading skills. Advanced piano players are invited to audition for the String Ensemble to be the piano accompanist for the group. This ensemble performs a variety of music from several different musical genres. Participation in school concerts and Closing Exercises is **required**, and a limited number of community events may count toward the student's grade.

Piano Accompanists

For students with advanced performance skills on piano looking to maximize their playing time, we are providing opportunities for piano accompanists. If chosen, they will be matched to perform and practice with one of the music ensembles selected for their course. Selection will be based on auditions. Please reach out to Mr. Donato at cdonato@shadysideacademy.org for information on the piano audition process by May 15th, 2024.

Note: Jazz Band, Select Strings, and Core Choir are non-credit, auditioned musical ensembles. They rehearse once or twice a cycle during the Conference Period.

Please email Brian Johnston at bjohnston@shadysideacademy.org or Chris Donato at cdonato@shadysideacademy.org with any questions.