



SEVENTH GRADE ORCHESTRA YEAR-LONG CURRICULUM

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Table of Contents

Page 2- Program and Course Goals

Page 3- Scope and Sequence

Page 4- Skills rationale

Page 5- Course information

Course description and objectives

Pages 5-7- First performance information

Pages 8-10- Second performance information

Pages 10-12- Third performance information

Pages 12-14- Fourth performance information

Pages 14-15- Assessment information

Program and Course Goals

Program Goals:

- I want my students to listen critically, demonstrate proper playing technique, and show proficiency in sight-reading and improvisation.

Course Goals:

- Seventh grade orchestra students will listen critically to a variety of music.
 - This connects to National Standard 6 because they will be asked to analyze and describe different music in a variety of ways. I will be using this in different ways for different concerts.
 - Standard 7 also applies to this goal because I will be having the students listen to their performances and evaluate them.
- Seventh grade orchestra students will demonstrate proper left and right hand playing techniques for their instruments.
 - Standard 2 is the connection for this goal, because if students do not have proper playing technique, then they cannot perform on their instruments.
 - This also connects to Standard 3 because they will be using their instruments to improvise throughout the semester.
- Seventh grade orchestra students will explain the difference and identify whether a passage is in major or minor.
 - This goal also connects to Standard 6 because they will be asked to identify the mode aurally.
 - The students will also be asked to identify whether a piece is major or minor based on written notes and key signatures, so that will connect to Standard 5.
- Seventh grade orchestra students will sight-read a variety of works.
 - Standard 5 applies to this goal because the students will be reading music.
- Seventh grade orchestra students will improvise in a variety of ways.
 - This goal directly applies to Standard 3.
- Seventh grade orchestra students will provide connections between various musical pieces and other art forms.
 - Standard 8 is the best connection to this goal.
- Seventh grade orchestra students will explain the historical and cultural contexts of various pieces of music.
 - The connection to this piece is Standard 9

Scope and Sequence

	Performance 1	Performance 2	Performance 3	Performance 4
Skills Developed	-Proper playing technique -Finger patterns -Rhythm-16 th notes -major vs. minor	-Identifying tone -major scales	Rhythm-eighth/sixteenth patterns Tremolo -use of fourth finger -more work with tone -beginning improv	-improvisation -knowledge of different cultures -tone -syncopation -cello and bass slaps
Musical Elements Addressed	-16 th note slurs -Finger patterns -Lyrical melodies over repetitive bass lines -Importance of texture to tone -A (A) B A form -Expression to make repeated notes and passages sound interesting	-Expressive melodies -Different textures -Timbre -Expression	-eighth/sixteenth note patterns -passing a passage between sections -timbre -ABA' form -making a difference in sound between repeated sections	-syncopation -fast 16 th notes -pentatonic scale -cello and bass slaps -improvisation -theme and variation
Styles/ Genres Covered	Program music	Holiday music -Christmas -Hanukah	Bagatelle Suite	
Historical Periods Covered	Romantic & Modern	Romantic	Classical	Modern
Cultures Discussed		Jewish		-Russian -Celtic
National Standards Addressed	Standard 1 Standard 2 Standard 5 Standard 6 Standard 7	Standard 1 Standard 2 Standard 5 Standard 6 Standard 7 Standard 8 Standard 9	Standard 2 Standard 5 Standard 6 Standard 7	Standard 2 Standard 3 Standard 4 Standard 5 Standard 6 Standard 7 Standard 9

Skills Rationale

Proper left hand placement-this would be the first thing to make sure that they know because without the proper left hand technique, it doesn't matter how well they bow, they will still be out of tune.

Finger patterns- this would be next so that they know the notes for each pattern and the relationship between them. They will be able to figure out spacing of fingers for each pattern.

Bow hold- once the students know what notes they are playing, then they can move onto bowing. I will focus on the actual holding of the bow, as well as bow placement on the string and sounding points.

Rhythm- working with scales, I will give the students different rhythms to play. This will enable them to play a wider variety of music.

Major keys- I will be using this as a framework for future improvisation lessons. They need to know the notes in the scales so that they will know what notes will fit in with the improvisation. It is also good for them to know these scales for future composition, and basic intonation.

Major vs. minor- once they have a good grasp on major scales, then I will introduce minor through the act of finding the relative minor from a major scale. I will then move on to having them discuss and explain how the two are different note wise, but also how they are different aurally. I would like them to see that minor is more "sad" or ominous sounding than a major scale.

Tone- major vs. minor will move nicely into the concept of the tone of a piece. Once the students identify whether a piece is in major or minor, I will have them find the relationship between that and the mood of the piece. They will identify specific aspects or passages of the piece that demonstrate this mood.

Improvisation- one of the last things that we will explore is the idea of improvisation. I will start them out by playing a short passage over a simple bass line. I will give them the notes that they can use and they will choose the pattern in which they want to play them. After that I will have improvisation in some of our ensemble pieces. They will need to identify which notes are appropriate to use in each instance, then improvise like they did before. Improvisation is important for young people to learn so that they are not afraid of it when they are older. Jazz ensembles and other smaller ensembles often call for improvisation.

Course Information

Course Description:

This course is the orchestra class for seventh graders. In this course, students will review and solidify the concept of proper playing techniques. Along with this, they will be focusing on the tone of a piece and what that tone tells us about the piece. Throughout the semester, they will be sight-reading in order to strengthen note and rhythm reading. In the later parts of the year, students will be introduced to improvisation and will be given the opportunity to explore that in numerous settings.

Course Objectives:

- Students will demonstrate proper bow hold and left hand playing techniques.
- Students will demonstrate all finger patterns successfully.
- Students will identify the tone of a piece.
- Students will identify whether a piece is in major or minor, and explain how it effects the mood of the piece.
- Students will improvise in a variety of ways in order to build confidence in key signatures and in their playing ability.
- Students will sight-read a variety of music in order to strengthen note reading, rhythm reading, and ability to play musically.

Performance 1:

- **Performance Pieces**
 - *1812 Overture*- Tchaikovsky/ Gruselle
 - *Lullaby*- Hofeldt
 - *Forever Joyful!*- Balmages
 - *Fantasia for Strings*- Del Borgo
- **Skills and Musical Elements Addressed**
 - The *1812 Overture* will contain a lot of sixteenth note slurs, which will be new to a lot of seventh graders.
 - Between all of these pieces, each of the finger patterns for each of the instruments will be utilized, solidifying the students' knowledge of them. This will also help them see the application possibilities for these finger patters beyond scales.
 - *Lullaby* touches on harmony in the form of accompaniment passages. The main melody is in the first violins almost the entire time. While the melody is beautiful, without the other lines, it would be empty. This is going to be one of the pieces that we will use to focus on tone.

- *Forever Joyful* also uses a bass line to complete the melody. The bass line is repetitive, so I will help the students feel the music in order to make it more interesting.
- All of the pieces have important textural moments. The overture and fantasia are full for a lot of the piece. This is a nice contrast to the lighter textures of the lullaby and joyful pieces.
- The form that we will be talking about is in *Lullaby*. The students should already know ABA, so this is just repeating the first A section.
- Musical expression will be a focus in all of the pieces, but especially in *Lullaby* and *Forever Joyful*. In these two pieces, the melody over the accompaniment will have to be played delicately. It is very easy for accompaniments to overpower the melody. The melodies themselves will have to be played with a lot of expression in order to successfully portray the tone.
- **Other Aspects Addressed**
 - There are very different styles happening between these pieces. *1812 Overture* is program music, meaning that it was written to portray a specific story. The *Fantasia* is more energetic, with obvious A and B sections. *Lullaby* is just that, and must be approached with delicacy. Finally, the *Forever Joyful*, is a piece that explores the various levels of joy.
 - The two musical periods that we will be covering is the Romantic Era, and the more modern. *1812* was written following the Russian victory over Napoleon, so we will explore that a bit.
 - National Standards
 - **Standard 1:** Throughout the preparation of this performance, I will have students sing different passages of the music in order to determine the appropriate phrasing for that passage. I will also have them sing different lullabies that they grew up with, and then comparing them to *Lullaby*.
 - **Standard 2:** The rehearsals, playing tests, and the performance itself will show that the students can perform on their instruments alone and with others.
 - **Standard 5:** Part of the preparation process for *Lullaby* and *Forever Joyful* will be having the students create short passages of music depicting the tone that they think each piece should portray.
 - **Standard 6:** Following the performance, I will have the students listen to a recording, and they will be asked to evaluate it. They will need to discuss things that went well, things that we could work on, and things that they personally would change if they could do it again. I will also use the singing of the lullabies and composing to have them describe tone and analyze music to that extent.
 - **Standard 7:** This standard aligns well with the beginning of what I talked about in standard 6. They will be evaluating their own performances, but

I will also be asking them to attend other recitals and to provide an evaluation of that. I will only require one recital a concert, and provide a list of free recitals in the area, as well as those that cost money.

- **Lesson Ideas**

- For this first concert, there are a couple different things that I want to try with the orchestra, some I have already mentioned in the standards portion. Shortly after starting *Lullaby*, I want the students to compose short lullabies, or pieces that have the same tone that they think lullabies have. We will be exploring these, and then moving into the tone of *Lullaby*.
- After composing their own lullabies, I will have the students bring in lullabies that they like, or had sung to them growing up. We will sing these lullabies in class, with a focus on tone, expression, and dynamics. This will also be tied back to *Lullaby* and how these things effect the outcome of the piece.
- We will be making dynamic or phrase roadmaps for some of our pieces throughout the year. The more expressive pieces will require more attention.
- After coming to a conclusion on *Lullaby*, we will compare and contrast the tone with the other three pieces in our concert. We will talk about why we would have pieces with different tones, and what that changes in the overall feel of the piece.

- **Music Rationale**

- *1812 Overture*: I chose to include this piece because it is a piece that almost everyone knows. This arrangement is easy enough that seventh graders will be able to play it, but not so easy that it is boring. There are also a lot of opportunities for dynamic and expressive contrast between the different sections of the piece. This one is also more upbeat, so it is a good start to our first concert.
- *Lullaby*: Since I will be focusing on tone and expression throughout the year, I chose this piece because it is rich with opportunities for expression. The melody is memorable and gorgeous, and the accompaniments fill out the sound seamlessly. However, it is fairly repetitive, so we have to make sure to focus on making the repeated phrases different each time.
- *Forever Joyful*: This piece is a nice in-between for *1812*, *Fantasia*, and *Lullaby*. It is upbeat, but with lyrical sections that require a lot of expression. The whole piece revolves around the idea of joy and joyfulness, so making sure that each section is joyful, but in a different way will be really important.
- *Fantasia for Strings*- This piece takes us back to the upbeat side of things. It has a full texture, which will feel much larger after the more expressive middle two pieces. It also ends full and with intensity, so it is a great finale to our first concert.

Performance 2:

- **Performance Pieces**
 - *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairies*- Tchaikovsky/ Longfield
 - *In the Bleak Midwinter*- Holst/ McBrien
 - *The Christmas Dreidl*- England
 - *Christmas Sing-Along*- Cerulli
- **Skills and Musical Elements Addressed**
 - Throughout this performance and the preparation, we will be talking a lot about tone and texture.
 - The melody of *In the Bleak Midwinter* will require the students to think about expression and how it fits in with the rest of the orchestra.
 - *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairies* is a great piece to talk about texture. The beginning is unison and quiet so the students will have to figure out how to work together to get the sound that they want. Throughout the piece, more layers are added, as well as more volume. They will need to show a difference between the unison sections and the sections with many different things happening.
 - *Christmas Sing-Along* will also be a good piece to focus on texture. While we are rehearsing, we will get used to playing by ourselves. This will be different when we add in the vocal parts.
 - *In the Bleak Midwinter* is the best piece to talk about timbre with. It will have to be played with expression on the forefront of the students' minds.
 - Musical expression is present especially in *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairies* and *In the Bleak Midwinter*. The dance requires the students to play softly, but with a lot of intensity. While *In the Bleak Midwinter* focuses more of the expression of a melodic line.
- **Other Aspects Addressed**
 - All of these works are known holiday pieces. We will be going over what it is about the pieces that make them for the holiday season. This will include background and purpose for them being written.
 - *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairies* and *In the Bleak Midwinter* were written during the Romantic period, while the other two are more modern.
 - We will be exploring the Jewish culture, and the history of Hanukkah through *The Christmas Dreidl*.
 - National Standards:
 - **Standard 1:** This standard is addressed directly through *Christmas Sing-Along*. Throughout the preparation time, I will have random groups of students sing the carols so that the rest of the orchestra can get an idea of what it will sound like. Also, I would like to work with the choirs on this piece.

- **Standard 2:** Students will achieve this standard through their formal performance. However, I would like to take them on a “traveling orchestra” trip to the different elementary schools around town. We will be doing the sing-along, and then we will choose the other piece that they want to play for the younger students. Playing tests will also fulfill this standard.
 - **Standard 5:** Reading through, for rehearsals and the performance, will complete this standard.
 - **Standard 6:** We will listen to the dance and midwinter pieces in order for the students to explain why they sound the way that they do. They will be asked to identify the tone, and what about the music creates that tone.
 - **Standard 7:** Like with the first performance, I will have the students listen to a recording of their performance and evaluate it. I will also have them reflect on their involvement and if it changed between the two concerts. They will also need to fulfill the recital attendance expectation for this concert as well.
 - **Standard 8:** I will be talking about *The Nutcracker* ballet and how all of that came about. This will connect music to dance.
 - **Standard 9:** We will talk about the history and culture behind Hanukkah and the dreidl.
- **Lesson Ideas**
 - We will explore the history and culture behind Hanukkah. The students will learn an overview of the Jewish beliefs, and the traditions that are around Hanukkah. This will lead into learning about the dreidl and what it means.
 - We will also explore the entirety of *The Nutcracker* ballet. We will talk about what was going on when this music and ballet were created, and the specific role of the sugar plum fairies.
 - Along with focusing on this specific ballet, we will talk about how the music effects the outcome of the ballet. We will also be listening to and watching different ballet sections and relating that to our piece.
 - I mentioned this above, but we will be doing a travelling orchestra with our holiday music. We will be going to the elementary schools and giving performances. This will allow the students to perform for a younger crowd, and it will work as a great recruitment opportunity.
- **Music Rationale**
 - I chose to include *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairies* because it is a very well-known piece to be played during the holiday season. Along with this, I could see a nice way to incorporate the other arts in with it. The students will have to be

focused on their tone and expression throughout this piece, especially in the quiet, intense sections.

- *In the Bleak Midwinter* was chosen because it provides a nice contrast to the other pieces on the program. While the others are fairly light and upbeat, this one is extremely expressive and slow. This will require the students to think about how they are portraying the piece.
- I chose to incorporate *The Christmas Dreidl* so that we would include another holiday besides Christmas. I like this piece because it uses both Christmas, and Hanukkah music. I can use this as a way to show that we can be knowledgeable about other cultures while holding onto our own.
- *Christmas Sing-Along* is just a fun piece to finish off our holiday concert. It invites the audience to participate in the singing, which I think that both parents and students will enjoy. It uses known Christmas carols, so there will be no need to add music to give to the audience.

Performance 3:

- **Performance Pieces**

- *Knight's Quest*- Newbold
- *Bagatelle Op. 119*- Beethoven/ Gruselle
- "*Jupiter*" from *the Planets*- Holst/ Baker-Monday
 - This piece is from the festival required repertoire list
- *Medieval Wars*- Balmages

- **Skills and Musical Elements Addressed**

- The students will be learning about tremolo and different eighth/ sixteenth note patterns.
- I will really be pushing the use of fourth finger instead of open strings for the upper strings during this performance.
- We will be doing some beginning improvisation work as well.
- The eighth/ sixteenth note patterns will come from *Bagatelle*. These types of rhythms are in a lot of the repertoire that the students will encounter in high school and college.
- Tremolo is also something that is in a lot of the upper-level repertoire. *Medieval Wars* contains a lot of tremolo that they can practice with.
- There are a lot of faster passages in *Jupiter* that the students might have trouble with. The best thing for them to do to address this is to use fourth finger instead of open strings. This eliminates string crossings, allowing them to move faster.
- *Bagatelle* has a section where there is a passing eighth note run that is passed throughout the orchestra. We will be working on making those transitions seamless. The students will need to listen to the other sections so that they

come in with the same dynamic, style, and expression as the section before them.

- *Jupiter* has a very distinct timbre that we will be exploring. I will connect this back to *In the Bleak Midwinter* that we performed in the previous concert. We will be comparing and contrasting the two.
- *Medieval wars* is in an ABA' form. Like I stated before, they should know ABA before this year. We will be focusing more on the last section and how it is different from other ABA forms. In this case, the A' is a combination of the A and B ideas.
- *Jupiter* also gives us a great opportunity for musical expression. There are a lot of repeated notes in the melody and accompaniment parts. We will explore different ways to make these notes more expressive.
- **Other Aspects Addressed**
 - We will be exploring the bagatelle style of music, as well as what a suite is.
 - The Classical period is a new musical period that we will be exploring.
 - National Standards:
 - **Standard 2:** The students will perform on their instruments during the actual performance, and for playing tests.
 - **Standard 5:** During the performance, rehearsals, and playing tests, the students will be reading music.
 - **Standard 6:** Like with the other concerts, we will be listening to sections of the music in order for the students to analyze what makes the music sound a certain way.
 - **Standard 7:** Along with the performance review that they will do, the students will also, again, be expected to attend at least one recital. They will turn in a review of what they heard, and how the performer presented the music.
- **Lesson Ideas**
 - We will be doing more work with tone and expression with each of these pieces. We will also be going into more detail about why certain musical elements work better for different tones.
 - Since tremolo and the eighth/ sixteenth patterns are newer to the students, we will be spending a lot of time working on those rhythms. I will be using these in warm-ups for the majority of the rehearsals.
 - As stated above, we will be doing some work with the ABA' form. This will include labelling the different sections and explaining why they are different. The students will be expected to talk about tone, rhythms, and texture in pointing out these differences.
- **Music Rationale**

- *Jupiter* was chosen for this concert because it most closely follows the tone of the other pieces in this performance. This piece comes from the list of required repertoire for music festival, so the students will have multiple opportunities to perform it. When I saw the repeated notes and passages, I knew that it was something that the students could work on. Even at a collegiate level, making a difference between repeated notes is something that is often overlooked.
- I chose *Knight's Quest* because it is a fun piece that I believe students will have a fun time playing. It also contains many of the elements that we are working on in the other pieces.
- *Bagatelle* is the piece that I chose to slow down the performance. The other pieces are mostly upbeat, with a dark feeling. While this piece is similar in the tone, it is slower, but extremely intense. This piece contains the eighth/sixteenth patterns that we will be exploring, as well as the process of passing eighth notes between sections. Overall, this piece requires each student to listen to the other sections of the orchestra.
- *Medieval Wars* is a great ending to this concert. It has a similar feeling to *Knight's Quest* with the Renaissance-like rhythms and melodies. It is this piece that contains the revised ABA form that we will need to talk about, as well as the tremolo.

Performance 4:

- **Performance Pieces**
 - *Road Trip to Rio*- Ligon
 - *Fantasia on a theme from Thailand*- Meyer
 - *Meadowlands*- Bobrowitz
 - *Celtic Force*- Frackenpohl
- **Skills and Musical Elements Addressed**
 - This performance will be focusing on the cultures behind the pieces, as well as improvisation. *Road Trip to Rio* has a section built into it specifically for improvisation that we will be working with.
 - We will also be doing some work with syncopation. *Meadowlands* has a lot of syncopation in the bass lines.
 - The fantasia will be used for speed work. There are a lot of fast sixteenth note passages that we will have to work on.
 - Also in the fantasia, it is comprised of a pentatonic scale, so we will talk about that a bit.
 - The cellos and basses will have fun learning how to do instrument slaps in the fantasia as well. They will pluck and slap the fingerboard, which I will have to differentiate from slap pizz.
 - We will be talking about theme and variation form with the fantasia as well.

- **Other Aspects Addressed**

- All of these pieces are in a modern style, with aspects of different cultures.
- *Fantasia on a Theme* will be used to explore the culture in Thailand. Russian culture will be covered in *Meadowlands*, and we will be learning about the Celtic culture through *Celtic Force*.
- National Standards:
 - **Standard 2:** The rehearsals, concert, and playing tests will require the students to perform on their instruments, both alone and with others.
 - **Standard 3:** Using *Road Trip to Rio*, the students will be exploring improvisation. We will start with simple patterns, and move into melodies.
 - **Standard 4:** To begin our journey to improvisation, we will be creating a composition as a class. The initial idea will be improvised, which is not considered a composition until we write it down. We will then move on to actual improvisation.
 - **Standard 5:** Reading the music for the concert will satisfy the requirements for this standard.
 - **Standard 6:** I will be showing the students examples of improvisation through jazz recordings. They will need to explain what they hear during the passages. As with the other performances, they will be listening to the pieces that we are playing and asked to explain the differences between them.
 - **Standard 7:** As with the other performances, the students will be asked to attend a recital, and provide an evaluation. We will also be listening to the recording of our concert again.
 - **Standard 9:** This whole concert contains music from different cultures, and we will be exploring each of them in turn.

- **Lesson Ideas**

- We will be exploring the different cultures behind each of the pieces. In order to do this, we will be listening to other music from each culture and comparing them to the pieces that we are playing.
- As stated above, we will begin improvisation work with writing a short composition for the class. It will begin by creating different patterns that we play with scales. Using scale degree numbers, we will do simple, four note patterns. After they have learned each pattern well enough, we will practice by randomly going between them.
- After learning the patterns and using them in scales, we will apply them to *Road Trip to Rio*. In the improvisation section of the piece, there are chords provided. The students will play a pattern of their choice in G major for four measures, the D major for two, and then back to G major. We will practice going from playing

together to the solo section. We will go around the room and take turns practicing improvisation in a solo setting. This way, every student gets the chance to improvise.

- After we work with improvisation using patterns, we will move to complete improvisation. I will let them know that they can think in the patterns that we have created, but they do not have to use them, and that they can and should add passing tones. Each student will play for the class again, and then we will vote for a couple different students to play the solo for the concert.
- With each of these pieces, we will be talking about what instruments would be used in the cultures. Since these are all orchestral arrangements, the students will need to see and hear what it would sound like on culturally appropriate instruments.
- **Music Rationale**
 - *Road Trip to Rio* is included in this concert in order to introduce improvisation. Besides that, it is a great opening to a concert, with faster rhythms and a lighter tone.
 - *Fantasia on a theme from Thailand* was chosen because I wanted to have a culturally diverse concert during the year. This piece gives the students a glimpse at the culture of Thailand, and is also a good piece to introduce the form of theme and variation.
 - *Meadowlands* portrays the countryside of Russia. This piece will be used to explore the Russian culture, and work on syncopated rhythms. So far, throughout all of the concerts, the rhythms have been fairly straight forward, so this piece will be a little more difficult.
 - Finally, *Celtic Force* will introduce the Celtic culture. By the end of the concert, the students will have displayed music portraying several cultures, and this piece is a great finale to our concert, and the year.

Assessment:

- As I have said many times, the students will be doing an evaluation of each concert, as well as a personal reflection. This type of assessment is both self-assessment, and peer-assessment. By evaluating their own performances, the students will learn to listen critically to themselves as well as others. I will ask them to listen to their specific section, as well as the whole orchestra. What did we do well? What could we improve on? They will also become more proficient at brainstorming and figuring out ways to fix what they didn't like. They will have to explain why they didn't like something as well.
- The most common informal assessment that we will use is listening critically. Throughout the year, I will play sections of each piece as we learn it. The students will be asked to identify the tone of the piece, and what makes it so. This will be in the form of group and full class discussions. This way I will be able to get a level of what each

student hears and why. Then we can all decide together what we want the piece to sound like.

- Playing tests will be a criterion-referenced type of assessment that I will use in my class. For each concert, the students will perform and playing test to determine seating, and so that I can see where they are at technically. In these tests, I will be assessing their ability to play with proper technique, musicality, and general knowledge of the piece. Within these playing tests, the students will also be asked to sight-read a short excerpt. I will probably use excerpts from one of the pieces in a future concert. This will allow me to see how they are at reading the notes and rhythms without a lot of prep time.
- Specifically for *Road Trip to Rio*, I will go around the class and have each student try improvising in the solo section. This will be after they have learned the patterns so that they will have a general idea. However, they will be responsible for knowing the notes that are in the different keys and being able to switch between them quickly. This will allow me to see where they are at key signatures, as well as counting ability. If they continue on in the same key for a measure or more after they were supposed to change, then I know that we need to do more work with counting in different time signatures.