



O. D. TOMPKINS HIGH SCHOOL ORCHESTRA

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www.tompkinsorchestras.org

Matthew Porter, Director

Sarah Marts, Assistant Director

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Dear Future Tompkins HS Orchestra Member,

Believe it or not preparations have begun for the next school year and we're happy to welcome the class of 2027. Over the past 10 years we have enjoyed our reputation as a tight knit orchestra family, and we can't wait for you to be a part of our team next year!

At Tompkins HS we strive to create orchestras of like-minded people committed to making beautiful music and connecting through building personal relationships. As one of the premier orchestra programs in Texas, we seek to develop every musician at every level of musicianship.

Communicating audition material and knowing how you will fit into the program are the first steps of your journey. Audition material is included with this packet and will serve as an assessment of your current musical skills for correct class placement. Please do your best and work hard to present yourself in a positive light. There are no second chances for a first impression. Due dates and specific guidelines for the audition will be sent through your current orchestra director.

Our leadership team will include a few 9th grade orchestra members, so as you prepare your audition you'll want to decide if you'd like to run for a 9th grade representative position next year. We want YOU to be a part of the awesome Tompkins HS Orchestras. Exciting times are ahead as you have a chance to become a part of an amazing group of student musicians! In the meantime, please check out our website and get connected with our social media feeds.



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Sincerely,

Matthew Porter & Sarah Marts

Tompkins HS Orchestras

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Frequently Asked Questions

How many students are in Tompkins Orchestras?

We are projected to have about 240 members next year in grades 9-12. We will continue to be one of the larger orchestra programs in Katy ISD & the Houston area.

Can I play sports at Tompkins and be in the orchestra?

Yes, conflicts may arise but with good communication these conflicts are very easy to resolve. Many students and parents may not know, but four years of a fine arts class earns the Arts & Humanities Endorsement on your diploma in addition to any other endorsements you earn. In fact, college admissions boards are looking for students that can participate and balance multiple activities in which a student excels.



What is orchestra like at the high school level?

All of you have come from well-developed junior high orchestra programs. You should expect much of the same commitment to excellence and pursuit of musical wisdom.

Tompkins orchestra will emphasize

performances with varying units that cover many different styles, genres and forms of music literature. Other areas of study include music theory, music history, culture and music listening skills as we seek to develop the complete musician.

Do we have to audition to be part of the Tompkins Orchestras?

Yes, so that we can place you in the correct orchestra (skill level) we must assess your current talent level. We must hear every incoming 8th grader perform on their instrument at a minimum level. Auditions consist of two major areas: scales and audition music (or solo). See audition packet for more complete details. If you need help, please ask.

Does OTHS have a full orchestra?

Yes, full orchestra (Tompkins Symphony) is a tradition we established in year one! We combine members of the varsity Falcon Band with our Sinfonia & Sinfonietta orchestras to perform symphonic literature each year. There is not an additional class to register for because this orchestra currently meets on Monday afternoons.



What is the Musical and how can I participate?

Every two years the Tompkins Fine Arts Department puts on a musical production that involves band, choir and orchestra members in addition to theatre students. Two of our musical productions (2016 & 2022) earned The Tommy Tune awards for overall BEST ORCHESTRA! Our next production is set for January of 2024.

What other commitments must I make in order to be a member?

After school sectionals (once a week) are a valuable part of our program and are mandatory for members of the Sinfonietta and Sinfonia orchestras. Think of it as a free small group lesson! Also, Sinfonia/Sinfonietta members are required to attend Monday Afternoon Rehearsals each week to prepare for certain concerts and full orchestra performances. All students may need to attend additional dress rehearsals or clinics throughout the year. Any additional rehearsals/clinics will be communicated well in advance.



What expenses do we have as an orchestra member?

There are a few nominal fees that each student must pay at the beginning of the school year. Students pay an activity fee, fair-share fees, a uniform maintenance fee and purchase a garment bag. As part of the performance uniforms, male students provide their own tuxedo shirt, black socks and black dress shoes; and female students provide black hose and black dress shoes. Additionally, students purchase the informal concert uniform, which consists of the orchestra t-shirt. Students that choose to participate in our social events (i.e. musical field trips, bowling, paintball) pay for their admission and food costs. The spring trip and the end of the year is also an additional expense.



Do I have to buy a tuxedo or formal gown for the concerts?

No. Katy ISD issues a formal uniform to every enrolled student; however, there is a maintenance/dry cleaning fee that must be paid. Also, there are different uniforms according to the different performances that we have. Although most of our performances require the formal uniform, periodically, we will wear our informal uniform (orchestra shirt and jeans).

Do I bring my cello or bass back and forth to school?

Similar to your junior high program, cello and bass players use a Katy ISD instrument for a fee of \$80 per instrument per year. This fee is paid at the beginning of the school year to cover the cost of normal wear and tear on school instruments. Violinists and violists will transport their instruments back and forth each day but do have orchestra lockers to store them in.

What individual competitions and contests are available to me?

All students are encouraged to audition for membership in the Region 23 Orchestra during the fall. Additionally, students may choose to keep working toward the highest level of orchestra: TMEA's All State Orchestras. The spring semester is highlighted by the annual UIL Solo and Ensemble Contest. At the highest level, students may compete at the Texas State Solo & Ensemble Contest in Austin and the Katy Young Artist Contest in Katy. Both are held in May. Furthermore, students may compete in local civic organizations and youth orchestras in the area. The Houston Youth Symphony and Virtuosi of Houston are a few prominent orchestra organizations outside of school.



Earning points towards a letter jacket is another exciting honor to work towards in the orchestra. It's cool to be seen around school in your letter jacket... especially if you are one of the first in your class to earn one.



Are we going to hold any social events?

Our student leadership team (orchestra officers) will select, plan, and coordinate all social aspects of the orchestra. You can look forward to some unique and very entertaining social events during the year!

How can my parents be involved in the orchestra program?

Our parent board (Tompkins Orchestra Friends) is always looking for helpful parents that are excited to help out the director and students. We have meetings once a month and will ask parents to contribute in many different ways. Chances are your parents have something to contribute, whether it be baking goods, bringing snacks, chaperoning events, helping fundraisers, etc.

What kind of fundraisers do we do?

The OTHS orchestra plans community related fundraisers that not only raise money but benefit the community in which we all live. Each year we love running a free car wash (donations accepted) for the OTHS community. We also have our annual DUCK RACE in the spring semester, featuring a live rubber duck race for some great prizes! Other entertainment includes family fun, games, food, and live music.



What are the benefits of being a member of the orchestra?

Members of the orchestra benefit immensely from their time invested! Everyone knows that focused practice and performance is the key to successful music making but there is much more.



Orchestra members will explore music theory, music history and general music appreciation. After all music is math, science, history and culture rolled into one.

Orchestra takes the development of real-world skills to the next level: teamwork, discipline, dedication, pride, commitment and integrity. These skills are highly valued by the finest university systems around. Being part of such a group is, without a doubt, held in very high regard by admissions offices all around the country and will set you apart from other non-music students.

Individual honors such as All-Region, All-Area and State Orchestra membership, medal at UIL Solo & Ensemble and, of course, the Tompkins letter jacket are all incentives for being a member of our elite group of students.

The Tompkins orchestra family is a tight knit group of friends who support each other, laugh, learn, and love to make music. The potential for our orchestra program is limitless as long as we continue the passion and hard work developing excellence in our art form.

Any additional questions regarding the Tompkins Orchestras are welcome. Feel free to contact the director, Matthew Porter, through email or phone.