

## **Course Description for Strings Classes (*Music 2160 & 2260*)**

Teacher; Mr. Higgins  
2020-2021 Academic Year

Strings, is a course designed to give students a foundation in the rudiments of playing an instrument of the orchestral string family (violin, viola, 'cello, or upright bass). Alongside playing techniques; students will learn various theoretical rudiments such as musical notation and reading, as well as listening skills. These will be facilitated by an introduction to theory and ear training. Grades will be based on attendance and punctuality, testing, writing assignments and overall progress.

Both students and parents should note that this course is a yearlong commitment that necessitates great diligence and supreme patience. Music offers many important tools to the student. Aside from the intrinsic value of learning an instrument, students will be exposed to the arts, develop a strong work ethic conceptualization/realization of short and long term goals. Students will also develop problem identification/solving skills, as well as time management skills. Finally; students will develop socio-musical skills.

The goal for the class is to gain the proficiency and knowledge to be able to join String Orchestra; Music 2020, for the following academic year.

Attendance and Punctuality:

- Each student is required to attend all classes and report to class promptly.
  - As we only meet three times a cycle, it is imperative that we make the most out of our time. Class participation is a large percentage of the overall grade in strings therefore attendance will affect participation.

### Requirements:

- Students will be given school instruments for the year. Unless a student already owns his/her respective instrument.
  - Every effort will be made to give the student their first choice of instrument to learn.
- Violin and Viola students will be required to bring their instruments to school on the days they have class, unless otherwise instructed.
  - Storage will be provided for violin and viola students while their instrument is in school.
- It is required for students to bring their instruments home when class does not meet back to back. Students will be graded periodically on instrument take home.
- St. Francis Prep cannot assume responsibility for instruments left overnight.

- Current resources do not allow for ‘cello and bass students to be given instruments for at-home practice.
  - Therefore practice time should be allotted during free time, before, or after school. A daily practice routine should be established, as a portion of your grade will be based upon preparedness of exercises. Arrangements can be made for in home rental instruments if need be.
  
- Students will be responsible for the basic care of their instruments.
  - Cleaning the strings and body (especially the top) of the instrument with a dry rag after each use.
  
- Loosening the bow after each use.
  - These simple actions greatly extend the life of the instrument and bow, and take just a few moments to do.
  
- Students need to report ***any and all*** problems with their instruments to their teacher ***immediately*** as normal wear and tear will occur, and are most often easily fixed. Please do not attempt an in home repair, this will usually cause more harm than good.
  
- Students will be required to buy a method book and rosin, through the music department, for the class.
  - Violin and viola students may also wish to purchase a shoulder rest, this facilitates comfort and ease while playing, and can be obtained through the music department, or at any local music store for a nominal fee. The cost of method books and music is approximately ten dollars.
  
- Students will need a pencil for every class. All markings made in method books must be made in pencil.

- Students will be required to maintain a practice record. This record is to go hand in hand with private lessons and should contain the following.
- Date, time and amount of time for each practice session, goal of the session, pedagogical questions/concerns, as well as general comments about improvements made or obstacles encountered.
- This record will be used as a tool for troubleshooting difficulties with a given instrument.
- Practice logs will be checked periodically.
- Students will be expected to adhere to all school rules and regulations as listed in the school calendar, including the St. Francis Preparatory School Honor Code.
  - Students must display proper respect at all times to their teachers, their classmates, and most importantly, display self-respect in their attitude and their work.

### Assignments:

- Students will be required to practice for a minimum of one hour per day that they have an instrument available to them.
  - Please note, this time does not need to be consecutive.
  - Students should schedule regular practice times.
  - The bulk of a student's practice time should be earlier in the day rather than later, as practicing a musical instrument is a physical activity.
  - Practicing is a good habit to have!
  - Students should note that that the school has individual practice rooms available to them for use during the school day.
  - Daily practice is vital to the student's success.
  - Practicing cannot be accomplished by "cramming."
  - Practicing is equivalent to daily homework in any other class.

- There will be quarterly playing exams, as well as short in class playing and writing quizzes.
  - These exams are the primary assessment tool for the class.
  - Students will be advised of the dates and details of exams in advance.
  - The fourth quarter and final exam are one and the same.
- On ***Friday, January 15, 2021, at 7:30 PM,*** there will be a performance featuring all students in beginner classes. This will give every student learning an instrument a performance experience. It is mandatory for all students enrolled in a strings course to be present at the January performance. Also it will be required that the afternoons of the week leading up to the performance are also kept free for group rehearsal.

### Goals:

- To develop a strong work ethic.
- To develop our level of technical skill through class work and individual practice.
- To heighten our level of responsibility and respect (including self-respect, sense of accomplishment and pride).
- To become more patient and thorough learners.

- To reach the highest attainable level of musicianship.
- To reach a level of musicianship and enthusiasm to join String Orchestra (Music 2020) next year.
- To thoroughly enjoy making music with each other in our class community.

### Grading Policy:

- Students will be graded in the following manner each quarter:
- Averages of any exam or paper during the quarter, including an accurate practice record, and a participation grade (participation, attendance, punctuality, and conduct) as follows
- The final grade for the course will be an average of all four quarterly grades and the average of the final exam (20% each).

### Resources:

- Students should check the class web page via [www.sfponline.org](http://www.sfponline.org) for regular updates and various resources available to them.

- Students should take advantage of all the cultural offerings that living in New York City presents.
  - Extra-credit will be given to students who attend live performances of Classical or string-related music.
  
- Students wishing to heighten their level of ability and musicianship are encouraged to study privately, outside of Prep.
  - Those students needing a reference for a private teacher should speak with Mr. Higgins, or Mr. Johnston.

### Conferences:

Students are encouraged to see Mr. Higgins if they feel they are having any difficulty in regard to the class. Time will always be made to give extra help or speak with a student at mutually agreeable times. If students are in jeopardy of failing the class, they will be notified by Mr. Higgins as well as having an academic deficiency report sent home.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) who are concerned about their child's performance/participation in strings are encouraged to speak to Mr. Higgins at Parent/Teacher interviews, by phone at (718) 423-8810 x255 or by e-mail at [jhiggins@sfponline.org](mailto:jhiggins@sfponline.org).

Dear Mr. Higgins

I have read the course description for Strings Class (Music 2160, 2260) with my child and understand the requirements and policies for the class. I also understand that my child will be held accountable for all aspects of the St. Francis Preparatory School Honor Code as described on page 19 of the school calendar.

If I have any questions, I am aware that I can reach you at the school at (718) 423-8810 x255, by e-mail at [jhiggins@SFPOnline.org](mailto:jhiggins@SFPOnline.org), or see you during parent/teacher conferences. I also understand that you are available at mutually agreeable times to meet with my child if s/he has any questions or difficulties.

Students and parents should note that this course is a yearlong commitment that involves diligent patience and thorough study. Music offers many important tools to the student. Aside from the intrinsic value of learning an instrument, students will be exposed to the arts, develop a strong work ethic, and a concept of long and short term goal setting. Students will also develop problem identification and solving skills and time management skills. Finally, students will develop socio-musical skills.

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P a r e n t / G u a r d i a n  
Signature\_\_\_\_\_

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S t u d e n t  
Signature\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Print  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

Student

Date \_\_\_\_\_