



JOHNS CREEK HIGH SCHOOL ORCHESTRA

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Dear Parents,

I am pleased to announce that the Johns Creek High School Chamber Orchestra has been selected to perform at the prestigious 71st Midwest Clinic-an International Band & Orchestra Conference in Chicago, Illinois. This conference will be held from Wednesday, December 20 – Saturday, December 23 in the McCormick Place West Convention Center in Chicago. We will receive specific date and time of performance by end of June. For those of you who are not familiar with this event, please allow me to explain this to you.

The Midwest Clinic in Chicago is the largest instrumental music education conference in the world. This conference draws over 17,000 participants from all fifty states and over thirty foreign countries. Not only is it the largest music education conference in the world but also the most prestigious. The very best bands and orchestras, through rigorous screening and competitive procedures, are selected to perform. Some of the orchestras and bands that have performed in the past include groups coming from as far away as Japan, Belgium, China, and Spain. Past performers include: Chicago Symphony Orchestra Brass, Eastman Wind Ensemble, Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra, Doc Severinson, Wynton Marsalis, various United States Arm Forces bands, such as the United States “President’s Own” Marine Band, the United States “Ground Forces” Army Band, and the U.S. Air Force and Navy Bands.

The Midwest Clinic is considered the most prestigious performing venue in the country and perhaps in the world. Therefore, being selected to perform at this conference is a huge honor for our school, our community, and our state. The Fulton County Board of Education is very familiar about this event and is extremely proud of our achievement.

I am enclosing a letter provided by the Midwest Clinic specifically to inform you, the parents, about the Midwest Clinic. In addition, I am enclosing a past Midwest experience notes (from my former students of Centennial High School and Johns Creek High School), and other pertinent Midwest-related information. In addition to my Chamber orchestra students, the parents of the Chamber Orchestra students, and some of my Sinfonia/Philharmonia Orchestra students may be allowed to travel with us, given that there are still spaces available. If you (parents) plan to travel independently, please let me know in advance, so that I can issue you and your guests the convention passes. These passes will allow you to attend all performances, clinics, and exhibit halls.

Because of its prestige and important nature of this event, there will be a great deal of time and commitment required on our part to ensure success. Personally, it is very assuring to know that competent and experience parent volunteers will assist me in this endeavor. You will hear from them sometime soon.

My first Midwest Clinic attendance experience goes back to the year 1998....

Prior to my first Midwest attendance, I have heard so much about the Midwest Clinic and of its rich history and glamour. I knew some of the best groups and clinics were offered for the music educators at this convention. But, I had no idea to the extent in which it has affected me as a music teacher. Attending Midwest Clinic in December of 1998 gave me a totally different perspective about music education. Meeting face to face with the legends in the field of music education inspired me to become a better music educator.

One of the groups that I heard that particular year (1998) profoundly inspired me for the rest of my life. It was the Plano Senior High School Orchestra from Plano, Texas, led by Kathleen DeBerry-Brungard. The concert blew me away! I was so inspired, challenged, and enthused about teaching as a result of hearing that performance! I could not wait to go back to my students. I wanted to share my enthusiasm, excitement, and information with my students at Centennial High School. I also had a renewed energy and aspiration to elevate my students' level of musicianship.

Several years have passed since my first visit to Midwest Clinic....

Kathleen DeBerry-Brungard, the person that has inspired me, became one of our GMEA Large Group Performance Evaluation judges. She heard my Centennial High School Orchestra at the GMEA LGPE Festival. Upon hearing my group, she suggested that I bring my orchestra to the Midwest Clinic. Ms. DeBerry-Brungard told me that the Midwest experience would be a life-changing experience for my students. Thus with Ms. Brungard's blessings and her encouragement, we applied to perform at this prestigious venue in year 2005.

Incredibly, on our first try (usually it takes several tries), we got accepted to the 59th Midwest Clinic conference in Chicago! And, Ms. Kathleen DeBerry-Brungard was right! My students at Centennial High School had the most memorable and the best experiences ever! To further enhance our experience, Chris Martin, the Principal Trumpeter with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (now he is the Principal Trumpeter with the New York Philharmonic), agreed to play with my high school orchestra at Midwest. A person of his stature would typically play with some of the best professional orchestras in the world. Wow!

I have been attending the Midwest Clinic every year since my first visit of 1998. There are so many wonderful clinics and performances that offer for the attendees.... Both the teachers and the students have the opportunities to listen to wonderful groups and attend innovative clinics to get inspired and learn. They can then take back this renewed enthusiasm and ideas back to their local schools.

I am so pleased and thankful that our Johns Creek High School Orchestra will be among the very best orchestras in the world to participate in this prestigious 71st Midwest Clinic in Chicago. I am proud to announce that this will be this school's second time performing at this prestigious venue. We are thrilled and honored that our performance may inspire and touch lives of many young teachers and students, as the Midwest performances in the past have inspired others.

The Johns Creek High School Orchestral program, going into its ninth year, has achieved so much.... We have been invited to perform in major venues such as twice performing at the Georgia Music Educators Association Conference in Savannah, Georgia (2011, 2015); performance/trip to Universal Studios in Orlando, Florida (2011, 2017); and the invitational performance at the National Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, D.C. (2012); European Tour (Italy) in 2014.... Now, we are excited about taking on this new challenge of performing at the Midwest Clinic- International Band & Orchestra Conference in Chicago.

Please be assured that we will work very hard to prepare for the Midwest Clinic. We will do all we can to proudly represent our Johns Creek High School, this community, Fulton County Schools, and the state of Georgia at this important and prestigious venue. I am very confident that the students will step up to meet this incredible challenge. As always, we appreciate your support, enthusiasm, and encouragement. Thank you so much for all you do for your child and for this program. I look forward to another great year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Young K. Kim". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "Y" and "K".

Young K. Kim
Director of Orchestras
Johns Creek High School

**Sharing Midwest Clinic Trip/Performance
by my former students at
Johns Creek High School Orchestra (2012) and
Centennial High School (2005)**

"Congratulations on getting into Midwest! You guys are going to have an amazing time in Chicago. It's an amazing city with tons of awesome stuff to do and see, and there's nowhere else with deep dish pizzas. The Midwest conference was such an awesome experience. I was a freshman when we went on the trip and it was really the reason why I got so involved in Orchestra later throughout high school. It was a lot of work getting ready for the convention, and we worked really hard every week, but throughout the process I got to bond with the people who would become my closest friends in my four years at JCHS! The friendships you'll make next year will last you for a lifetime and being able to explore Chicago with your closest friends will be amazing! Make the most out of this awesome opportunity!

-- George Pan, JCHS Class of 2016

"First, I want to say congratulations for being selected to perform at Midwest Clinic! For me, this was one of the most fulfilling experiences I've been lucky to have in high school. The reason for this is two-fold: process and destination. It really is a special feeling to pour your heart (sweat, blood, tears, etc.) into something and experience the pay-off of that hard work. That's exactly the feeling I felt after our Midwest performance. Midwest was memorable because all the students worked so hard and intensely together. During the rehearsal hours and pizza party breaks, I got to know orchestra members a lot better too. I believe that the preparation was at least 70% of the Midwest experience. Being in Chicago and attending the Midwest Clinic was an amazing experience as well. The city is beautiful (and really cold in December), and we got to have a lot of fun eating deep dish pizza, exploring the art museum, and being very touristy at the Bean. At the convention center, I learned a lot just from roaming around with friends, listening to performances and talking with vendors. Again, congratulations on this amazing opportunity! I hope you find it as worthwhile as I did.

-- Annie Su, JCHS Class of 2016

"The Midwest Clinic was one of the most memorable experiences of my high school career. As the world's largest music conference, the Midwest Clinic was an extremely prestigious event that I knew was an extreme honor and achievement by our group. All the blood, sweat, and tears that we poured out into each rehearsal and individual practice were completely worth it. We were able to perform in Chicago before an international audience, displaying all the hard work that we dedicated to delivering our best possible performance, and the audience was simply blown away by the precision and musicality of a high school group. It was also such a blessing and honor not only to perform at such a venue, but also to listen and learn from some of the best ensembles in the world.

Not only was the experience rewarding in a musical sense, but it was also so much fun. Through all the rehearsals, the flight, and the trip itself to one of the nation's largest cities, we orchestra kids grew even tighter than ever before. We had a lot of time to explore the city together, taking pictures in front of the Chicago Bean, eating a deep dish pizza for the first time, visiting the art museum, and so much more. I am so excited and proud that the Johns Creek students will once again have this once in a lifetime opportunity to perform at the Midwest Clinic and also to grow in community together."

- Priscilla Kim, JCHS Class of 2014

CONGRATS on once again successfully challenging and helping the orchestra grow and achieve another selection to perform at Midwest!! I can't say that I'm surprised; the amount of dedication and hard work that goes into perfecting every piece is demonstrated at every single concert! And although this honor did not come as a surprise, it is still something to be truly grateful for, because, after all, it is an honor.

Having the opportunity to go to Midwest my sophomore year was such a memorable experience! Traveling to Chicago with my closest friends made the Midwest experience so much greater. Playing in an international stage and holding the Johns Creek High School orchestra reputation was a truly fruitful and humbling experience. I can't wait for you all to have all your hard work pay off and have some fun while doing it! Best wishes!

-Mariana Rodriguez, JCHS Class of 2015

*"CONGRATS JC ORCHESTRA! You are all obviously amazing and talented and spectacular individuals AND a stellar group. You all accomplished this together- so get ready for one of the greatest trips you will EVER take with each other! I can honestly say I took this trip for granted during my time, and I wish I hadn't! You don't get to do cool stuff like this at just any high school with just any director with just any orchestra. We got to see the coolest and best parts of Chicago (which I now know going to school here), all because we **earned** it as Johns Creek Orchestra with Mr. Kim!*

*It goes without being said that this trip takes time, practice, effort, hard work, and discipline. You all have those passionate and deterministic qualities: you wouldn't be in this position otherwise. I don't need to tell you to work hard during these next few months because I know you all already have that drive within you! Just **keep up** that hard work (so just no slacking!!) and it will surely pay off.*

*No matter what, please enjoy these next few months and the trip that makes it all worth it! Enjoy a slice of deep dish, the view from the Hancock building, and even a crazy shopping spree at Water Tower. Hey- maybe you'll even get a pic at the bean if you tell Mr. Kim that you **NEED** to see it like I did (hehe). Additionally, make sure you enjoy all the resources and people you meet at the expo. These are world-class musicians and sponsors with crazy connections and opportunities. Make use of it! I can't say anything other than live every moment to the fullest. Sending love always! Go JC Orch! (& Go 'Cats!)*

-- Leigh Healey, JCHS Class of 2014

Congratulations to you all for being selected for the Midwest Clinic again!! This is such exciting news as it is a testament to all the work you have put in and the amazing talent that the orchestra program has.

My Midwest Clinic experience was in December 2012, and I have so many fond memories of it. The performance itself was a unique experience. It feels different to be performing outside of the high school auditorium, but it's an exhilarating feeling to be so focused and in-sync while performing with everyone and so rewarding to see the huge audience that comes to listen and applaud after you're done.

Besides the performance, participating in the clinic was also a new way for us to engage with music. It was so cool to listen to other groups perform and showcase different pieces. I remember listening to a marimba (I think) concerto which was something completely new to me, and I was kind of mind-blown. Not only that, but walking through the conference center and seeing different instruments and talking with vendors and different music groups was really interesting and fun.

Outside of the clinic, we had such a fun time exploring Chicago. I'm studying at Northwestern University now, and whenever I go to downtown Chicago and see the places we went to, it brings back so many great memories and reminds me of all the amazing people I got to experience the city with. I honestly still talk about it today! Enjoy the opportunity and savor every moment!!!

(And don't forget to breathe and move together.)

-Janet Mao, JCHS Class of 2015

"The Midwest Clinic was an amazing opportunity for our orchestra. Travelling to Chicago to perform not only meant we were being recognized for our hard work and achievement, but also that we had the honor of sharing our music on a much greater level than what we were doing in Georgia. So many different people come to the Midwest conference - it is a real treat as a young musician to take in all the different ensembles, music companies and professionals who gather in one place to grow from one another.

I will never forget it! Midwest was additionally special to me as it was the first time I truly got to see Chicago - the city in which I grew most as a music professional and where I currently work and live. It is home to an amazing orchestra and encourages the arts in every way possible. When we played at Midwest, Chris Martin (who had just won principal trumpet in CSO and was about to leave Atlanta) soloed with our orchestra. He was incredible then; and I still enjoy watching him onstage every week I can with the symphony. What a treat that was!

There is a lot to learn from the Midwest Conference and the city of Chicago. Take in everything you can and have fun! These opportunities are special, make the most of them."

-- Allegra Montanari, CHS Class of 2006

"At first the prospect of going to Chicago and attending Midwest with other musical groups from around the country was a little intimidating. As a group I believe we all felt the pressure of performing. But once we were there, and the reality of it set in it became an unforgettable experience. Being in a big city made me feel small, looking up at the tall buildings; but then I would look around me and see all the people that were there with me sharing the same feelings. It was probably the best bonding experience I had in my four years in orchestra.

During the performance we were all so focused and determined. We were all relying on one another to play our best and to represent not only our school, but each other to the best of our abilities. You just have to remember that you all are there because of your hard work and your chance to show how proud you are.

Enjoy Midwest, because it is truly a once in a lifetime opportunity that you will remember forever. Don't forget to breathe and move together. Good luck to you all."

--Jessica Vet, CHS Class of 2007

"Attending Midwest with the Centennial orchestra in December 2005 was one of the highlights of my high school career. The summer before Midwest, I remember receiving the sheet music for one of the songs we'd be playing and spending hours practicing with much anticipation and excitement. Collectively as an ensemble along with the wonderful leadership by Mr. Kim, we worked together, rehearsing twice a week outside of school in preparation. Those long rehearsals that were often times very intense were what contributed to the success of the orchestra. Midwest was definitely a rewarding experience and it was a showcase for all of the hard work each individual put into it.

Additionally, the trip in and of itself was very enjoyable; going to the great city of Chicago with your peers to perform at such a prestigious clinic while also being able to sight-see amounts to the perfect package. I look back fondly and am so grateful that I was able to attend Midwest."

--Raha Sabet, CHS Class of 2007

"The trip up to Chicago to participate in the Midwest Clinic was a blast. The opportunity to play music at such a high level in a prestigious clinic is definitely an experience worth having. Not only is the music great, but you also get the chance to go on a trip to a new city with a large group of friends, which won't come by very often in your life. The experiences you have on your Midwest adventure will form fun memories that you'll keep with you forever."

-- Chris Gay, CHS Class of 2007

"That's so exciting to hear, congratulations!!

I'm glad that all their hard work is paying off :) I remember from my Midwest experience that whatever work you put in at the beginning, it pays off in the end. We worked hard preparing so that by the time it came down to the performance we could just enjoy it.

My advice would be to not let the easy stuff catch you off guard: you don't want to mess up on something silly. And I would also strongly suggest the students go for it, traveling with the orchestra is a LOT of fun. It's work to prepare for the performance; but, once they're in Chicago I'm sure they'll love the performance aspect of it, as well as touring the whole city. Chicago is cold in the winter, but it's an awesome city to be in with friends - there is so much to do! Even after graduating college, I still remember this trip."

-- Katie Wagner, CHS Class of 2008

"First, I want to say CONGRATULATIONS to you all for your selection to perform at the Midwest Clinic in Chicago!!

I went to the Midwest Clinic in Chicago when I was a freshman, and it was truly an AMAZING experience. I learned so much as a musician in preparing for Midwest, such as the importance of listening to each other, watching for cues from the conductor and each other, breathing and moving together, etc... I didn't realize this at the time, but these are simple things that play a critical role in making a phenomenal performance.

I remember looking back at the tapes and thinking to myself: Wow, we look and sound like a professional orchestra. We worked so hard and all our hard work really paid off! One of my favorite parts of the day was getting a compliment from the composer of one of the pieces we played: The "Black Sea" by Gary Gackstatter. I was blown away.

I also had a great time exploring Chicago with my new orchestra friends, and getting to know everyone in the orchestra. We saw a Blue Man Group Performance, which was awesome! I have no doubt in my mind that you all will have an incredible time!! The Midwest Clinic is something that I will rave about for the rest of my life!!! Keep up the hard work!!"

-- Koushy Biack, CHS Class of 2009