

Hello Parents of Students in Summer School Period 1,

We have had a great start to summer school band! It has been a real pleasure getting to know these young musicians! I have been very impressed with this group's focus. They are "all business" and eager to perform well!

We have started each class with a focus on the fundamentals of tone quality, breathing, and phrasing. The class has come a long way in these areas. To show off their progress they recorded "Aura Lee" and "Frere Jacques" (links below):
"Aura Lee" (June 22) — <http://tinyurl.com/goju3ov>
"Frere Jacques" (June 23) — <http://tinyurl.com/jf3wcs6>

(The links above will take you to Dropbox. You do not need a Dropbox account. If you are prompted to sign in simply "x" out of that option and you can listen to the recordings without needing a Dropbox account.)

As part of the group's practice they have listened to themselves perform and critiqued their blend, balance, and dynamics. They have made some great observations and are working on how to use their observations to improve their individual performances and the group's overall sound.

Part of each rehearsal has been spent playing "easy" songs from their "Essential Elements" book. I say "easy" because they have played songs at several different speeds. For instance they played "Camptown Races" from speeds of 60% up to 200%. The slower speeds allow students to focus their energy on tone quality, note reading, and tone production. The faster speeds challenge students' technique. I have suggested to the class that students start every home practice session this summer and beyond with an easy song played at several speeds from slow to fast.

The second half of each band class has been devoted to playing band arrangements. They have been learning about melody, harmony and bass lines. Next week they should have one or two of these band arrangements ready to share with you.

Please let me know if you have any questions about Summer School Band or your child's musical development. Also, if the recording link above doesn't work for you let me know and I can send the recording as an email attachment.

Thank you,
George Huff

Hello Parents of Students in Summer School Period 2,

We have had a great start to summer school band! It has been a real pleasure getting to know these young musicians! Period 2 is a small class of just twelve students. They are making great progress and sound like a much larger band!

We have started each class with a warm-up and a review the “Gold Band Chair Quiz.” This is the assessment all Highland-bound students will be taking in the fall. This collection of songs has been a good review for students who are not attending Highland as well. The quiz focuses on skills generally learned within the first two years of study on a band instrument. Their warm-up has included learning how to tune with a tuner. In class they have used my hand-held tuner and a free mobile app called “Bandmate.” Here are links to both the tuner used in class and the app.

Korg TM-50 — http://www.korg.com/us/products/tuners/tm_50/

Bandmate Tuner App — <http://www.bandmatetuner.com/>

After their warm-up and quiz review students have been working on full-band arrangements from their new band books. This week they recorded “Starfire March.” In the process of working on this piece they have been learning about how melodies, harmonies, and bass lines fit together. They have been listening to and critiquing performances of themselves.

Here is a link to “Starfire March” (June 20) — <http://tinyurl.com/gofkybs>

(The link above will take you to Dropbox. You do not need a Dropbox account. If you are prompted to sign in simply “x” out of that option and you can listen to the recording without needing a Dropbox account.)

Please let me know if you have any questions about Summer School Band or your child’s musical development. Also, if the recording links above don’t work for you let me know and I can send the recording of your child as an email attachment.

Thank you,
George Huff

Hello Parents of Students in Summer School Period 3,

We have had a great start to summer school band! It has been a real pleasure getting to know these young musicians!

Students in this class, “Band Level III” will be joining “Orchestra Level III” for a performance during class time on Thursday, June 30. We will be performing several Patriotic songs in celebration of our nation’s birthday! Here are the details about this performance:

Day and Time — Thursday, June 30 at 10:15 A.M.

Location — Behind the school near the basketball courts

All parents, family members, and friends are welcomed. Our program will begin about 10:15 and continue until 10:50. Our presentation will be outside, so bring a chair or blanket and enjoy. If it rains we will have our concert in the cafeteria.

Rehearsals for “Band Level III” have been going well. I have been very impressed at how well students have been learning the songs for their performance with the orchestra. These songs are in “orchestra keys” and require students to perform notes that are uncommon for them. The band has also been working on two songs they will perform by themselves at the concert. They recorded a “rough draft” of one of them for you on Wednesday of this week. This recording shows their current level of excellence on the piece. They will be even better next week. (Link below)

“The Red, The White, and The Blues” (June 22) — <http://tinyurl.com/z4kxcm7>

(The link above will take you to Dropbox. You do not need a Dropbox account. If you are prompted to sign in simply “x” out of that option and you can listen to the recording without needing a Dropbox account.)

Please let me know if you have any questions about Summer School Band or your child’s musical development. Also, if the recording links above don’t work for you let me know and I can send the recording of your child as an email attachment.

Thank you,
George Huff

Hello Parents of Students in Summer School Jazz Improvisation,

We have had a great start to our Jazz Improvisation Class! It has been a real pleasure getting to know these young musicians!

Students have spent first two weeks in this class gaining confidence soloing in Eb Major in a swing style. They have been using the exercises for the song "Evening Stroll" from their new "First Place for Jazz" book to do this. They have used many different improvisation strategies and games. On Wednesday of this week we had a recording session where every student performed an 8-bar solo. On Thursday we had a few pairs of students record one of the improvisation games from class as well. I spliced the two recording sessions into one recording for you (Link below — only those students' solos who wanted their solos shared are included in this recording.)

"Evening Stroll" — 8-Bar Solos and 4-Bar Battles/Duets —
<http://tinyurl.com/hq6ukqm>

(The link above will take you to Dropbox. You do not need a Dropbox account. If you are prompted to sign in simply "x" out of that option and you can listen to the recording without needing a Dropbox account.)

All students in this class have a copy of the jazz book, "First Place For Jazz." This book includes computer software that has all of the recordings used in class. The recordings are the best way for students to gain confidence soloing. Each song in the book has "Jazz Licks" students should memorize. Each song also comes with a background track of a high-quality rhythm section that students can practice soloing with. This recording is the "Improvisation Practice" recording for each song. The software and recordings can be downloaded off of the internet using the individualized codes found in the inside back cover of each book.

Next week students will start working on a song in Eb Mixolydian in a rock style. If they are ready they will record themselves soloing in that key and style next week. If not they will do so the following week.

I am looking forward to continuing to work with the students in this class on their jazz improvisation skills. Please let me know if you have any questions about this class or your child's jazz improvisation development. Also, if the recording link above doesn't work for you let me know and I can send the recording as an email attachment.

Thank you,
George Huff