



# Dear, Parents!

*We need your help to support your “kids” and make music education more effective!*

Another first! A special “reach-out” – Fox’s Fireside – **geared exclusively to music parents.**

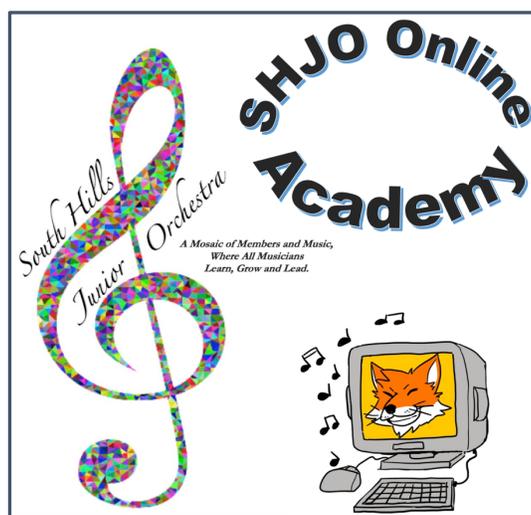
Before we start with the nitty-gritty, let us thank you in advance for all of your help and collaboration in your child’s music program and the **South Hills Junior Orchestra Online Academy (SHJOOLA)**.

We hope this finds “you and yours” healthy, safe, productive, and happily *engaged*. Since many of the schools are within a month to the end of their fall semester and second nine-week grading periods, we thought now would be a good time to step back a little and offer our assessment of how things are going.

**“When life hands you lemons, you make lemonade.”** In spite of the limitations brought on by the pandemic, the directors are doing everything in their power to connect with, stimulate, and enlighten the players and singers. In general, we are satisfied with the musical progress of everyone – the students are showing technical growth, mastery of the music, and even more importantly, great resiliency in dealing with these challenging times. SHJOOLA and other remote teaching or alternative music learning serve only as a temporary stopgap measure until all of us can return to our “live and in-person” rehearsals. However, it looks like this may not be until Spring 2021 or later.

**We would like to elicit the help of our music parents** to check in and observe the online activities of your son or daughter, and if necessary, intervene on behalf of them. This would help us improve the quality of the virtual music programs run smoothly. We have all found that online teaching is very hard. The limitations of this technology (latency and inability to sync the visual and audio portions of zoom meetings) will not allow the chance to *hear in real-time* performances of individual players or the group altogether. The most important “takeaway” from this message is **the camera on your household device needs to be operative and used every time we sponsor a class**. In addition, it is *not satisfactory* for anyone to position their device so that we cannot see them, leave the meeting early, *mute or disengage* from the virtual lesson discussions, or turn off their camera at any time. Video feedback is the *only* avenue available to “monitor and adjust” our instruction during any “synchronous sessions.” We have found that Zoom runs quite well on smartphones and tablets, and the cameras on these devices will suffice if the computer hardware is not up to the task.

So, effective immediately, if your child seems to be having trouble with his camera, we will notify you. *(Please let us know if you need any technical assistance. The cost of purchasing a new “web cam,” is as low as \$16 at WalMart. If we cannot help you, we’ll find someone who can!)*



*This message was sent to the parents and partners of SHJO members but is applicable to all music families. Music teachers everywhere need your assistance!*

As the character Jean-Luc Picard says in the *Star Trek Next Generation* series: **ENGAGE!** What are the **number one concerns of all educators** during this *disruption to education* caused by COVID-19, shared even by the “Plan B” strategies for music? – Loss of attention, sensitivity, communications, connectivity, empathy, and self-empowerment towards the pursuit of the students’ own inspired initiatives in learning!

In other words, “**distance learning should not be distant.**” To be effective, it needs to promote an exchange of dialogue, encourage *responsible online citizenship*, and goals to *reach-out and engage* within this unique “community!” (For those of you who enjoy reading about learning theory, feel free to peruse Mr. Fox’s recent educator blogpost about social emotional learning, “teacher presence,” emotional intelligence, “character” curriculum, habits of empathy, etc. at [https://paulfox.blog/2020/11/03/embracing-the-intangibles/.](https://paulfox.blog/2020/11/03/embracing-the-intangibles/))

Following the advice of several members and to keep the team more “connected,” our initial SHJOOOLA Zoom meetings will open 10 minutes early to allow for a little informal chit-chat! *How are you doing?*

**REMINDER: Whether hybrid or online, attendance to rehearsals is mandatory.** We understand that, on occasion, there will be illness, family, business, or other educational conflicts necessitating the missing of a Zoom meeting. For SHJOOOLA, our attendance policy is flexible, but notification of the SHJO Managing Director *in advance* is mandated: [mdirector@shjo.org](mailto:mdirector@shjo.org). (Please include your name and the reason for missing the session.) Considering all of the prep time your music directors are devoting to the lessons, it would only be “common courtesy” for the absentees to keep themselves up to date on what was presented, view the archived rehearsal videos or slides posted (for SHJOOOLA posted weekly at <http://www.shjo.org/online-academy>), and make-up all missed work within a few days of the absence.

FYI, the software embedded in our SHJOOOLA **MusicFirst Classroom** provides access to a valuable subscription that will last through June 2021. There are a lot of great tools and applications for members to freely explore asynchronously (on-their-own at their convenience) in order to foster self-improvements in ear training, music theory, performance assessment, sight reading, and writing/analyzing music.

**In conclusion, parents, we need you to “stop on by” and observe what’s happening with SHJOOOLA!** Our goal is to continue offering our free professional services in *making meaningful music*, playing duets, performing with online soundtracks, learning new (and in greater detail) musical concepts to “grow” our musicianship and comprehension of orchestral literature, and to *just have fun being successful*. PKF

These things are “NOT COOL” during online music classes...

- Arriving late to scheduled meetings (“early is on-time!”)
- Missing sessions and not “catching up” on the missed work
- Failing to download and print the music in advance
- Not having instrument and music (in order) ahead of the start of the meeting
- Turning off or re-positioning your camera so we cannot see you
- Failing to respond to questions or participate in the discussions
- Texting, emailing, or using any other device that distracts your attention
- Allowing interruptions or loud noises during the class
- Eating or drinking during rehearsals



Donna and Paul Fox

