



**Merit School of Music**

# **Family Handbook**

*Updated for Academic Year 2025-26  
& Summer 2026*

*Transforming the lives of Chicago-area youth  
through removing barriers  
to a high-quality music education.*

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## ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION

### Vision

Merit School of Music is Chicago's destination for excellence and belonging in music education for all.

### Mission

Merit School of Music transforms the lives of Chicago-area youth through removing barriers to a high-quality music education.

### Organizational Values Statement

- We **create** a culture of musical and personal excellence by igniting passion and nurturing persistence.
- We **cultivate** a welcoming, generous, vibrant community of learning.
- We **collaborate** with innovation, accountability, and empathy.
- We **celebrate** diversity, equity, and inclusion so everyone belongs.

### Teaching Values Statement

Merit School of Music achieves excellence through expert teachers who create a deep, inspiring, and motivating learning experience for a diverse student body.

### Core Teaching Values

- Excellence
- Expert Teachers
- Inspiring
- Motivating
- Deep and Meaningful

### Student Expectations

- Be prepared and be present
- Bring your best self to Merit
- Respect yourself, others, and the Merit Community
- Be inquisitive and creative

## **MERIT SCHOOL OF MUSIC PROGRAMS**

Merit offers a wide range of programs across multiple music disciplines, all organized in a sequential continuum of instruction. Below you will find links to each of Merit's programs.

### **Early Childhood Program**

Music & Movement classes at Merit are designed for families with children ages 0–8, offering weekly music exploration experiences that support early childhood development. The program also features a Spanish bilingual curriculum, and, in partnership with the Foundation of Hearing and Speech Resources an inclusive, school-based programming and tailored curriculum for children with hearing loss. To view Early Childhood Programs on Merit's website, please go [here](#).

### **Instrumental & Vocal Music Program (IVM)**

IVM features small group and large ensemble instruction for beginning and intermediate musicians in grades PreK-9 in five divisions: Band, Guitar, Piano, Strings, and Voice. Classes are 45 to 90 minutes depending on age level. The program runs for 29 weeks over the academic year and during the summer classes run twice a week for 7 weeks. To view IVM Programs on Merit's website, please go [here](#).

### **Alice S. Pfaelzer Conservatory**

The Conservatory, an audition-based program for musicians in grades 4-12, offers intensive instruction, and participation in large ensembles, technique, music theory, chamber music, and elective classes. The program runs 26 weeks over the academic year from mid-September through mid-April. Students spend between 4½ to 9 hours at Merit each Saturday depending on level and age. Through this program, students gain access to live performances, master classes, guest artists, college admissions, and a variety of performance experiences. To view information about the Conservatory on Merit's website, please go [here](#).

### **Private Lesson Program**

The Private Lesson program offers weekly individual lessons for students of all ages. Lessons are offered in 30, 45, 60, and 90 minute lengths. During the academic year students can take a standard package of 32 private lessons and during the summer session a package of 12 lessons. Lessons are scheduled based on the availability of faculty and students. To view information about Private Lessons on Merit's website, please go [here](#).

### **Merit: Music in Communities Program (MMiC)**

MMiC features group class, large ensemble, and private lesson instruction at community partner sites throughout Chicago. Programs range from 1 to 5 days a week and reflect what is offered in Merit's IVM Program (band, strings, orchestra, choir, guitar, piano in addition to early childhood and general music). Merit works with each to create

an individually tailored program. To view information about MMiC on Merit's website, please go [here](#).

### **Summer Music Camps**

Instrument-specific camps and workshops, lasting from one to two weeks, are designed so that students may continue their learning throughout the summer months. Camps are generally organized into full-day two-week camps and half-day one-week intensives. The summer session runs from mid-June to the first week of August. To view information about Summer Music Camps on Merit's website, please go [here](#).

### **Comunidad de Alegre**

Merit School of Music's Comunidad de Alegre is a community-based strings program providing suzuki based instruction for students in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago. To view information about Comunidad de Alegre on Merit's website, please go [here](#).

### **Music for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Children**

Merit School of Music is proud to partner with the Foundation for Hearing and Speech Resources (FHSR) to provide high-quality music education for children who are deaf or hard of hearing through the Music to My Ears (MTME) program.

For children with hearing loss, MTME provides the added benefits of easing language acquisition and reinforcing normal hearing patterned speech as well as the evidence-based benefits of music education, including social-emotional skills development, language development, and music appreciation. Through music education, our goal is to give the joy of music to deaf and hard of hearing children and all the lifelong benefits of having music in their lives.

To view information about the Music for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Children Program on Merit's website, please go [here](#).

## STUDENT SERVICES – REGISTRATION & FINANCIAL AID

During each registration cycle (described below), Merit produces a comprehensive Program Catalogue which is emailed out to families a couple of weeks before registration opens. Families should also keep an eye out for emails from the Merit with various programming updates throughout the year. Families can also view our offerings on Merit's [Registration Page](#) at any time.

### How to Register

Registration information for Instrumental & Vocal Music Classes, Early Childhood Classes, and Private Lessons can be found on Merit's website [here](#). *(This can be found at: Meritmusic.org: Resources tab: Student Resources: scroll down to How to Register.)*

#### Instrumental & Vocal Music and Early Childhood

- IVM and EC have enrollment periods in fall, spring, and summer.
- Students receive personalized recommendations for their next class based on faculty input.

#### Private Lessons

- Students can enroll in private lessons any time throughout the year.
- Continuing private lesson students will receive a personalized re-registration link during each new registration period.

#### Conservatory

- Conservatory students are required to audition/re-audition every year. Once accepted, students receive a registration link which they must complete to reserve their spot in the Conservatory.
- While tuition-free, Conservatory students must pay a registration fee annually, which is due at the time of registration. Payment plans are available.
- The registration deadline is June 30<sup>th</sup> and students receive their schedules in mid-August.

### Refund Policies

Refund policies depend on multiple factors, including Program, date of enrollment/withdrawal, and more. Below is a basic breakdown of our policies by program. For your specific situation, please contact our student services department by emailing [studentservices@meritmusic.org](mailto:studentservices@meritmusic.org)

Detailed information about refund policies can also be found on our website [here](#). *(This can be found at: Meritmusic.org: Resources tab: Frequently Asked Questions: scroll down to "Making Changes to Classes and Lessons": click on "What is your refund/cancellation policy?")*

### **Early Childhood**

- Withdrawal more than two days prior to the first class: *full tuition refund minus the deposit*
- Withdrawal within the first three weeks of the scheduled class date/time: *prorated refund minus the deposit*
- Full refunds are not available after the start of the semester.
- Withdrawal past the third week of the semester: *NO refund and family owes Merit tuition for the remainder of the session*

### **Instrumental & Vocal Music**

- Withdrawal more than two days prior to the first class: *full tuition refund minus registration fee*
- Withdrawal after up to three classes: *pro-rated refund minus registration fee*
- Withdrawal after up to four classes: *50% pro-rated refund minus registration fee*
- Withdrawal after five classes or more: *NO refund and family owes Merit tuition for the rest of the session*

### **Conservatory**

- There are no refunds for the Conservatory.

### **Camp**

- Withdrawal more than two days prior to the first day: *full tuition refund minus reg fee*
- Students withdrawing from classes that are six weeks or less in program duration are not eligible for a refund after the start date. *Families will owe Merit for full camp tuition if they withdraw after the start date.*

### **Cancellations**

- If Merit cancels group classes, Early Childhood classes, or camps/workshops, the school will make every effort to reschedule the student for another class at the student's level. If this is not possible, families will receive a full refund including tuition and registration fees/deposit amounts.

### **Financial Aid Information**

Merit strives to provide high quality music education to all regardless of economic circumstances. This is accomplished through private donor and grant-supplied funding that allows for discounts on tuition for qualifying students/families. Financial aid information can be found [here](#).

### **Registration Waiver**

Families accept a waiver at the time of registration pertaining to photography and videography, private lesson enrollment/policies, attendance, payment plans, and registration fees and refunds. The full waiver can be found below,



### **Marketing Waiver for Photography and Videography**

In consideration of my (and/or my child's) participation at Merit School of Music, I hereby release and discharge Merit School of Music, and its representatives, successors, and assigns (collectively also referred to as "Merit School of Music"), from any and all liability arising from accident, injury, and illness that I (he/she) may suffer as a result of my (our) participation, including participation in any virtual, synchronous learning through a web-based platform. I (we) also will follow the rules and regulations set by Merit School of Music and above-named parties. Parent or guardian must sign for anyone age 18 and under.

I do hereby grant and give Merit School of Music the right to use my or my child(s) photograph, image or previously tendered written statement, with or without my or my child's name, whether singly or in conjunction with those of other persons or objects and in presentations, advertising, publicity, and promotion relating to Merit School of Music or music instruction provided by Merit School of Music's faculty members and educational partners. If you prefer to opt out of the media waiver, please contact us at [info@meritmusic.org](mailto:info@meritmusic.org) to submit your request.

### **Private Lesson Enrollment**

When registering for Merit's private lessons, keep in mind that enrollments are for either the full academic year (approximately September to June) or the summer semester (approximately June to September). If needed, day, time and length changes can be made to your private lesson package at any time. Attendance is expected at all scheduled lessons. We are unable to provide refunds, credits, or make-ups for any private lessons missed by students. However, if teachers have need to cancel a lesson, they are required to make up the lesson or find a substitute to teach the lesson when possible.

### **Attendance for Classes**

Attendance is expected at all group classes. We are unable to provide refunds for missed classes. Enrolled families withdrawing after five or more group class instances are not eligible for a refund. Make-up classes are only available in the Early Childhood Program. Click [here](#) to read more about Merit's refund policies.

### **Payment Plans**

Payment plans are available; however, families are responsible for all installments of their payment plans—even if students withdraw from programming early. We are not able to prorate tuition fees for early withdrawals. Non-payment of payment plan fees may result in additional requests for payments, suspension of services, and referral of accounts to a collection agency.

**Registration Fees and Refunds**

All registration fees are non-refundable and must be paid in full at the time of enrollment. Conservatory registration fees may be eligible for payment plans. However, we are not able to prorate these fees for early withdrawals or late enrollments.

If you are eligible for a refund, the amount will be returned to you via direct deposit, check, or the credit card used at purchase. Refunds take 4-6 weeks to process.

Although registrations are occasionally accepted outside of the registration cycle, enrollments made after the registration deadline may be subject to a late fee.

## PROGRAM POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

### Attendance Policies

- Please review detailed information about attendance policies [here](#). *(This can be found at: Meritmusic.org: Resources tab: Frequently Asked Questions: scroll down to “Attendance Policies”: click on the appropriate program.)*
- You can also find absence forms [here](#).
- You can view a summary of Attendance Policies in the [Appendix](#).

### Preparation, Practice, and Class Requirements

#### Early Childhood: Class Preparation Checklist for Families

- **Verify Your Class Schedule**  
Log into your account to confirm your class day and time: [\[click here\]](#).  
A **PDF class schedule** will be sent with your Welcome Letter and can be resent upon request.
- **Check Your Email**  
Make sure your email address is up to date in your account.  
Look out for a **personalized Welcome Email**, which includes your class schedule in PDF format and other important details.
- **Arrival Time**  
Please arrive **5 minutes before** your scheduled class time to settle in.
- **Classroom Rules**
  - No shoes or food allowed inside the Early Childhood (EC) classroom.
  - **Socks are required** for all adults and children.
- **Stroller Parking**  
Please Park strollers **to the right of the front desk**, near the EC classroom exit door.
- **At-Home Music Engagement/Practice**
  - For classes serving children **ages 0–5**, families will receive curated **music playlists** to support continued music-making at home.
  - For students enrolled in **Music Masters 2, Ukulele & You**, and **Meet the Orchestra**, we encourage practicing at home **4–5 days per week**, in **10–15-minute increments** to reinforce learning and build consistency.
- **Need More Info?**  
Visit: [More Info Here](#)

#### Instrumental & Vocal Music Program

- Class Requirements
  - Come to class ready to participate
  - Make sure your instrument is tuned prior to the start of class

- Bring all required materials (including your instrument!)
- Caregivers should feel free to sit in
- Develop successful practice habits
  - Create a home practice space that is free of distractions
  - Schedule a consistent practice time
  - Let your student know that you can hear them when they practice
  - Give your student the opportunity to perform for you and your family

### **Conservatory**

- Class Requirements
  - Attend regularly
  - Practice at home and come prepared
  - Communicate with staff and teachers in advance – don't leave fellow musicians in the lurch
  - Be engaged, inquisitive, creative, and joyful in your music-making
- Preparation and Practice
  - A minimum of five hours per week
  - Suggest 10 hours per week for students planning to audition for music schools (juniors/seniors)
  - Merit expects all Conservatory students to participate fully in each class by practicing all materials assigned and preparing required written work. Merit expects all Conservatory parents to support their students in their practicing and class preparation for each week. Students should set aside time to practice 5 to 10 hours per week depending on their age.

### **Private Lessons**

- Preparation and Practice
  - Students are expected to practice and prepare all the materials asked of them by their teachers each week. Students and parents should set aside time each day for practice. The teacher guides the student and family with age-appropriate instruction about what and how to practice, and for how long to practice each day. If you have any questions about preparing for lessons, don't hesitate to talk to your teacher.

### **Student Progress**

Ongoing assessment of student progress and skills is a priority across Merit's Programs.

- **Early Childhood:** Parent participation in programs facilitates regular communication about student development and opportunities.
- **Instrumental and Vocal Music Program:** Faculty complete student assessments twice per year to show students' progress through the curriculum in musical skills and technique and classroom behavior. Assessments are shared with parents via email or during Parent-Teacher Conferences which are held following the winter and spring

concerts. Conferences are an opportunity for parents to speak one-on-one with their student's teacher to discuss student progress and recommendations for further study.

- **Private Lessons:** Students receive feedback about their musical progress from private lesson instructors on an ongoing basis.

### **Parent and Family Engagement**

Parents and guardians are expected to take an active interest in what your child is learning in class each week and help set up a practice routine at home. Regular communication with teachers about your child's progress at home will help elevate your student's abilities. Parent engagement may also vary based on Program Type and Instrument. Please contact your student's teacher for more information.

## PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES AND REQUIREMENTS

### Student Performance Opportunities

Student performances are an essential component of Merit's programming and each program's curriculum includes the development of performance preparation and skills as appropriate to the level. Regularly scheduled performance dates will be shared at the beginning of each year or class cycle. Additional performance opportunities will be communicated by your Program Director when they become available.

- **Early Childhood and General Music** classes often have "informances" (in-class performances narrated by the Merit instructor that demonstrate what the students learned throughout the year).
- **Instrumental & Vocal Music** students perform at least twice per year in their large ensemble setting and at least once per year in a smaller group-class setting. Performances take place mid-way through the year in January, and at the end of the year in May. Suzuki Alegre Strings students in group classes will also participate in the annual StringTacular performance each May.
- **Conservatory ensembles** perform at least twice per year in December and April, and group classes perform during weekly performance hour classes as requested or assigned by faculty. Chamber ensembles perform at least twice per year and compete in at least one regional competition. Alegre Strings students will also participate in the annual StringTacular performance each May.
- **Private Lesson** students are required to perform at least once per year with many individual studios presenting recitals twice per year. Suzuki students often do separate Book Recitals before advancing to the next level of instruction.
- **Merit Music in Communities** students generally perform twice per year, December and May/June, as part of the host schools' winter and spring assemblies. Alegre Strings students will also participate in the annual StringTacular performance each May.
- **Merit's annual Gala** typically takes place in the spring. Faculty will be contacted as soon as possible if their ensemble or student is being asked to perform. Merit allows for additional rehearsals to prepare for this event.
- **Conservatory Graduation** occurs in the spring on the Sunday following Conservatory concerts. Faculty will be asked to nominate student performers for this event, either soloists or groups that include or comprise seniors.
- **Stringtacular** is Merit's culminating Suzuki Strings event. Typically in late-May, students in Merit's Suzuki program gather together for a Friday rehearsal and Saturday performance to play-down repertoire.
- **Offsite performances by Merit students:** Several performance opportunities occur for Merit students each year at venues across the city. Performances usually showcase Merit's top large and chamber ensembles and take place at park district sites, colleges, and public and civic events, among others.

## Student Competitions and Scholarships

Merit provides various performance events and competitions where students can receive constructive and educational feedback from professional musicians. Faculty helps to educate students about and prepare students for these opportunities, which are also posted in the monthly newsletter.

- Merit's annual **Conservatory Solo Competition** is open to all Conservatory students. Students compete in either or both of two divisions —Private Lesson Scholarships, or Best Concerto. Winners receive endowed scholarship support for their private lesson instruction (four to five scholarships are awarded to winners each year) and/or the chance to perform with one of Merit's advanced large ensembles in the following academic year. These competitions are adjudicated by outside professionals; often, panelists are members of local, professional performing organizations (Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Lyric Opera of Chicago, etc.) or institutions of higher education in the Chicago region. Information about this competition is shared with faculty and students at the beginning of the Conservatory year.
- Merit hosts the annual **A.N. Pearl and G. Barnett Chamber Music Competition** which is open to chamber ensembles from throughout the Chicago region (including Merit groups). Student groups compete in one of two primary divisions—String/Piano, and Winds/Brass. Contestants, who must present 10-15 minutes of polished chamber repertoire, compete for over \$4,000 in cash prizes. The competition is adjudicated by local, outside professionals and the overall Barnett Chamber Competition Grand Award Winner is featured on Chicago's Introductions broadcast live from WFMT.
- **Advanced students** are encouraged to participate in local and national competitions. Several Merit students have been recipients of the Jack Kent Cooke Graduation Arts Award, among many others.
- Merit's competitive **Chamber Music Program** embraces the rigor of local and national competitions and supports all aspects of students and coaches' efforts by providing assistance with applications, fees, recordings, coaching support, lodging, and additional costs as needed.

## Student Concert Dress Code

Concert dress for students depends on the program. Concert dress codes for each division can be reviewed in the [Appendix](#).

## Attending Professional Performances

Merit encourages students to attend professional performances on a regular basis. There are free concert opportunities at Merit throughout the year as well as complimentary ticket offers to numerous performances in the Chicago area.

## FACILITY INFORMATION

## **The Joy Faith Knapp Music Center, 38 S. Peoria St., Chicago**

This is the central home of Merit School of Music and is in Chicago's West Loop Neighborhood where all of Merit's full continuum of programming is available. For more information about the location, programs offered, registration, etc. please go [here](#).

### **Building Access and Safety**

- During open hours, a front desk attendant monitors the entrances and controls access to the building. The attendant can also answer general questions for students and parents and accepts payments and applications.
- Students access the building through a doorbell (manned by the front desk attendant) and the doors are opened during peak instruction activity (Early Childhood classes and Saturday's Conservatory program).
- Visitors (including parents) are required to check in and provide their ID in exchange for a visitors pass. This is specifically to address concerns of safety in and around Merit's building. The Raptor Technology system also scans guests for sex offender convictions.
- Our administrative team has compiled the following protocols for situational preparedness (e.g., active shooter, ICE presence). Our priority is student safety during any law-enforcement or other similarly related activity.
  - COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS:
    - You will receive text and email updates in the event of a potentially dangerous situation.
    - Please wait for instructions from school leadership.
    - Families can opt-in to text updates and email communications on Merit's website.
  - Events that would lead to a SOFT LOCKDOWN include:
    - A potentially dangerous event has been reported near a Merit site (within two blocks).
    - In this case, you may check in at the front entrance to pick up your child.
    - Students will not be released to leave independently.
    - Classes already in session will finish normally.
  - An event that would lead to a full LOCKDOWN is:
    - A potentially dangerous event has been reported on school property. In this situation:
      - No one (including parents/caregivers and students) may enter or exit the building.
      - Students will remain in place with faculty and staff.
      - Remaining classes and lessons will be canceled for the rest of the day.
    - If you are not onsite and looking to connect with your child, please do not approach the building until you have received a communication



that the site is all-clear. We will do our best to communicate as much information as possible in real time.

### **Room Reservations**

Students can reserve practice rooms free of charge based on availability. They can also reserve space to make their own recordings or give non-Merit recitals by emailing their Program Director or Manager with the Student Room Rental Form (please see the [Appendix](#) for a copy). The Program Director or Manager will determine availability and rate (if applicable) and handle the details of the reservation. Students may also use one of Merit's large spaces (Gottlieb Hall, Foreman Hall, or Polk Hall) for free for the first hour and at a reduced rental fee after the first hour.

### **Merit School of Music Branch Locations**

#### **Merit School of Music: Near North Branch**

##### **Church of the Three Crosses, 333 W. Wisconsin St, Chicago**

Programs offered at Merit's Near North Branch are the Instrumental & Vocal Music Program (piano, guitar, and strings), Private Lessons, and Early Childhood Classes. For more information about the location, programs offered, registration, etc. please go [here](#).

#### **Merit School of Music: South Shore Branch**

##### **Bryn Mawr Community Church Parish Hall, 7000 S Jeffery Blvd, Chicago**

Programs offered at Merit's South Shore Branch are the Instrumental & Vocal Music Program strings group classes. For more information about the location, programs offered, registration, etc. please go [here](#).

## **GLASSER-ROSENTHAL LIBRARY**

### **Library Open Hour (Academic Year)**

- Tuesday-Thursday 4 p.m. -7 p.m.
- Friday by appointment
- Saturday 8:30 a.m. -2:30 p.m. (during the academic year only)
- Hours may change during the summer session
- Changes to open hours will be shared in the Monthly Program Newsletter

### **Library Facility and Collection**

Merit's Glasser-Rosenthal Library is located onsite at the Joy Faith Knapp Music Center. The library offers a wealth of high-quality materials for music instruction and performance and serves as a safe, friendly space for students and families to explore musical resources and find inspiration beyond the classroom.

The library's collection includes musical instruments and accessories, printed music, books, periodicals, journals, CDs, DVD and VHS video recordings; a range of electronic equipment such as CD players, headphones, and amplifiers; and a small assortment of formal concert attire.

The library houses two computer workstations equipped with basic office software and a subscription to the Naxos Music Library (an online platform offering streaming access to over 85,000 classical and jazz recordings), and one full-size piano keyboard for individual practice.

### **Instrument Rentals**

Students enrolled in Merit programming are eligible to rent an instrument from Merit's library. To initiate the rental process, families should submit an instrument rental form located under the [resources tab on Merit's website](#). *(This can be found at: Meritmusic.org: Resources tab: Student Resources: scroll down to "Fill out a rental instrument form")*

Instrument and supply pick-ups, drop-offs, and swaps are available during Library Open Hours or by appointment. Appointments should be requested 3 business days in advance by emailing [library@meritmusic.org](mailto:library@meritmusic.org). Find more information and FAQs about instrument rentals and policies [here](#). *(This can be found at: Meritmusic.org: Resources tab: Student Resources: scroll down to Rent an Instrument & Explore Our Music Library.)*

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Orientation Information

Program Orientations for IVM and the Conservatory are held at the beginning of the program year in the fall. Orientations provide important programmatic details and policies, including dates, calendars, program/practice/performance expectations, attendance, and concert dress. The specific dates for orientation are provided at the beginning of each program cycle. Information presented at the orientation is contained within this handbook. Orientation materials are emailed to families following the orientation presentation at the start of each academic year.

### Contact Information

- **Faculty:** For questions about your child's in-class progress
  - Collect your teacher's contact information on the first day of class
- **Program Directors and Managers:** For program-related questions or concerns
  - **Band/Jazz**  
Jeremiah Price, Program Director: [jprice@meritmusic.org](mailto:jprice@meritmusic.org); 312-267-4473  
Nylah Bradshaw, Program Manager: [nbradshaw@meritmusic.org](mailto:nbradshaw@meritmusic.org); 630-283-6377
  - **Guitar/Piano/Voice**  
Pam Shortall, Program Director: [pshortall@meritmusic.org](mailto:pshortall@meritmusic.org); 312-676-3690  
Sarah Forbes, Program Manager: [sforbes@meritmusic.org](mailto:sforbes@meritmusic.org); 312-252-4327
  - **Strings**  
Brian Beach, Program Director: [bbeach@meritmusic.org](mailto:bbeach@meritmusic.org); 312-267-4463  
Nicole Hernandez, Program Manager: [nhernandez@meritmusic.org](mailto:nhernandez@meritmusic.org); 312-267-4472
  - **Early Childhood**  
Sally Blandon, Program Director: [sblandon@meritmusic.org](mailto:sblandon@meritmusic.org); 312-578-8669  
Frances Kennedy, Program Manager: [kennedy@meritmusic.org](mailto:kennedy@meritmusic.org); 312-267-4477
  - **Program Administration**  
Autumn Selover, Program Coordinator: [aselover@meritmusic.org](mailto:aselover@meritmusic.org); 312-267-4467  
Amy Bischoff, Director of Program Operations: [abischoff@meritmusic.org](mailto:abischoff@meritmusic.org); 312-267-4466  
Kurt Gildow, Dean & Vice President for Educational Affairs:  
[kgildow@meritmusic.org](mailto:kgildow@meritmusic.org); 312-267-4469
- **Student Services:** For information about registration, billing, or financial aid
  - Student Services: [studentservices@meritmusic.org](mailto:studentservices@meritmusic.org); 312-786-9428
  - Student Services office hours during the year are Tuesdays – Thursdays @ 3:30-6:30pm or by appointment. Appointments may be requested 3 business days in advance. Email student services to make an appointment. Changes to office hours will be shared in the Monthly Program Newsletter.
- **Library:** For information about instrument rentals, supplies, and music
  - Todd Humphrey, Librarian: [library@meritmusic.org](mailto:library@meritmusic.org); 312-676-3694

### **Program Calendar**

- Calendars for each program outline the overall program schedule and highlight important dates for the year. Calendars are emailed out to families at the beginning of the session. Additionally, up-to-date calendars can be found here:
  - <https://meritmusic.org/calendar/>

### **Merit's Monthly Newsletters**

- Merit's monthly newsletter highlights important events for the upcoming month. Please check your spam folders for this information and be sure you stay subscribed! If you want to limit the emails you receive from us, please be sure to keep the "Programmatic Information" box checked when you update your preferences!
- The Conservatory program receives an additional weekly newsletter that shares Conservatory specific information each week.

## **APPENDIX**

*Scroll or click the links below.*

[Attendance Policies](#)

[Student Concert Dress Code](#)

[Room Reservation Form](#)

## ATTENDANCE POLICIES

- **Early Childhood**

Students are allowed up to **three (3) makeup classes per semester**. For example, during the **Fall Semester (approximately mid-September to mid-January)**, any additional absences beyond the three allowed will not be eligible for makeups.

If you need to miss a class and would like to schedule a makeup, please follow these steps:

1. Email [fkennedy@meritmusic.org](mailto:fkennedy@meritmusic.org) with the **date of the absence** and the **class being missed**.
2. **Request a preferred makeup class date** (based on availability).
3. **Wait for a confirmation email** before attending the makeup class. Unconfirmed makeups will not be honored.

Please note: **Due to ongoing enrollment, refunds or credits are not issued after three (3) weeks from your class start date.**

- **Instrumental & Vocal Music Program**

- Students who feel sick are expected to stay home
- Up to three (3) absences allowed per semester
- Dress rehearsals and performances are mandatory
- Please communicate absences in advance on Merit's website:  
[www.meritmusic.org/absences/](http://www.meritmusic.org/absences/)
- If you are marked tardy or leave class early three (3) separate times it equates to one (1) full absent day

- **Alice S. Pfaelzer Tuition-free Conservatory**

- Students are expected to attend all Mandatory Attendance Dates listed in the provided calendar at the start of the year.
- Students who feel sick are expected to stay home
- Up to four (4) absences allowed per class for the year
- Excessive tardiness or leaving a class early will result in an absence
- Absences must be reported at least one week in advance
- Communication pertaining to attendance is key
- Please communicate absences in advance on Merit's website:  
<https://meritmusic.org/absences/>
- Excessive absences or tardies may result in an Improvement Plan for your student. Parents will be notified well in advance should a plan be necessary.

- **Private Lessons**

- Regular attendance is expected of all students, and there are no excused absences from private lessons. Students will be charged for all lessons for which they register, including those that are missed as a result of student absence.
- Private lesson teachers will not reschedule lessons due to student absence or tardiness. As a courtesy, any student who is unable to attend a scheduled lesson should notify their private lesson teacher directly as soon as possible.

## **Student Concert Dress Code**

### **INSTRUMENTAL & VOCAL MUSIC PROGRAM**



#### **Concert Dress - look nice!**

- Shirts should have shoulder-length sleeves (cap sleeves) or longer. No tank tops. No graphic tees.
- Pants & skirts acceptable. No shorts. No jeans. Skirts should be knee-length or longer.
- Dresses acceptable, should also meet the above requirements.
- Dress shoes. No sneakers. No combat boots.

### **CONSERVATORY**

#### **Merit Wind Symphony & Merit Philharmonic:**

- Either:
  - Tuxes and black dress shoes with black socks
- Or:
  - All black clothing
  - Shirts should have shoulder-length sleeves (cap sleeves) or longer. No tank tops. No graphic tees.
  - Pants & skirts acceptable. No shorts. Skirts should be knee-length or longer.
  - Dresses acceptable, should also meet the above requirements.
  - Dress shoes. Socks should also be black. Tights/nylons should be black or skin tone.

#### **Piano Duets & Jazz Ensembles/Combos:**

- Students should plan to dress appropriately for performances (i.e. business attire or nicer; no jeans, tee-shirts, sneakers, etc.). Please see your teacher for more details and requirements for specific concerts throughout the year. Students performing in other ensembles (choir, band, etc.) should



consult their ensemble director for specific dress requirements for those concerts.

### **All other ensembles:**

- All black clothing\*
  - o Shirts should have shoulder-length sleeves (cap sleeves) or longer. No tank tops. No graphic tees.
  - o Pants & skirts acceptable. No shorts. Skirts should be knee-length or longer.
  - o Dresses acceptable and should also meet the requirements above.
  - o Dress shoes. Socks should also be black. Tights/nylons should be black or skin tone.
  - o \*Some ensembles require an additional coordination feature (red accent for Suzuki-Alegre, coordinated ties for chamber groups, etc.). Please talk to your ensemble director with questions.

### **PRIVATE LESSONS**

Dress or casual dress attire is required for recitals.

### **MERIT SUPPLIED CONCERT DRESS**

Merit has a small inventory of performance attire available for loan through our library. For more information, please contact Merit's Librarian, Todd Humphrey at 312.676.3694 or [thumphrey@meritmusic.org](mailto:thumphrey@meritmusic.org).

# Student Rental Form

My name is\_\_\_\_\_. My teacher is\_\_\_\_\_.

I play\_\_\_\_\_, and I need to record for \_\_\_\_\_.

Do you need any other equipment (instruments, chairs, tables, etc)? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

If yes, please tell us what you need:

Date(s) and time(s) I would like:

*\*Availability may be limited. Please list at least 2 dates.*

Date	1 <sup>st</sup> Choice Time	2 <sup>nd</sup> Choice Time	3 <sup>rd</sup> Choice Time

The first hour of usage is free of charge for Gottlieb Hall, Foreman Hall, and Polk Bros. Hall. Practice Rooms are free of charge based on availability.

General Availability: **Monday – Friday, 4:00pm – 9:00pm**

Space I am looking to reserve:

- ☐ Gottlieb Hall
- ☐ Foreman Hall
- ☐ Polk Bros. Hall
- ☐ Practice Room

Signing below confirms I know how much the Hall rental will be and I or my parents/legal guardians agree to pay before usage date.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Student or Parent)

Approval: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Program Director or Manager)

