

Germantown High School Band Students and Parents,

I apologize that you are just now hearing from me. Because of the fluid situation, I wanted to wait in hopes it would stabilize. But as you know, the Madison County School District, in accordance with state and federal guidelines is now closed until at least April 17th due the COVID-19 coronavirus.

I'm sure you have seen communication about how the district is planning on using online learning to continue instruction during this time. We are aware that many students' instruments are still in the band hall. On Monday, March 23rd, MCSD is allowing GHS Band Students to have their instruments picked up by their parents from 9:00am - 11am. **THESE WILL BE THE ONLY TIMES AVAILABLE TO PICK UP YOUR INSTRUMENT UNTIL WE RETURN TO SCHOOL!** You will need your instrument for assignments that will be given to you over the next month. The Administration has put the following guidelines in place:

1. This is curbside pick up only. You may pick up the instruments out in front of the High School Band Hall. No parents or students are allowed in the building under any circumstances. Students and parents are to REMAIN IN THEIR VEHICLES during pick up.
2. Instruments will be handled with latex gloves, and case handles will be wiped down with disinfectant wipes before they are given to the parents.

We will send out a google form in a text blast for you to RSVP your time for pick up. PLEASE DO THIS BEFORE MONDAY.

I hope to answer some questions you may have as they relate to each program offering—however, please understand that the situation is very fluid at the moment, and I can only answer for what I know to be true at present time.

High School Students

First let me just begin with telling you all how proud of you I am. Before we left for spring break, I heard some of the finest playing I have ever heard from the Germantown high school ensembles (both symphonic and concert bands). Leaving for spring break, I was so excited for you and would tell anyone who would listen to me how proud of you I am and how fantastic your concerts were going to be in April at state evaluation.

Symphonic Band students—luckily, we were able to get our Midwest Clinic audition recording for the application completed before the break, and I submitted the application to the Midwest Clinic Board of Directors this past Sunday. So that is good news! As of now, there is no indication that the clinic or the selection process will be affected. The Midwest Board of Directors has issued a statement extending the deadline for performance applications until March 30th. So, because of that we will find out a little later than we would have—probably around end of April or first of May. Having said all of that—you were phenomenal in your recording. I plan on sending it to you via Remind101 shortly after you receive this message. I think you will be very pleased with the recordings.

Fast forward a week, and it's a totally different headspace. I would be lying if I told you I am not heartbroken for you, for the staff, and for your parents and boosters. As of now, the remainder of the Mississippi Indoor Association season has been cancelled, the MHSAA has declared a halt to all activities (including state concert evaluation) for the foreseeable future, and all gatherings of 10 or more people have been prohibited- which would include the spring concert and band banquet. These are indeed historic times in which we are living and while surreal, they are in fact our new reality. The sense of community and family that has always been at the core of the Germantown Band program is now something that we all miss and are all longing to have back in our lives. But, in time, we will reunite and will be stronger than ever. I am assured of this. Regardless of these things being cancelled, I want you to know that your hard work and dedication were not in vain. The work you put into your performance made not only your band and your current skill set better this year but were crucial to building and making the entire Germantown Band Program better in the long run. For that, you should be proud.

So, what does all of this mean, for everyone?

It means that we will continue to stay dedicated to the same cause first adopted by the band program almost 10 years ago- excellence in everything we do with music as the catalyst. We will continue to appreciate and perform music whether it's larger groups (as we were accustomed) or smaller groups/individuals which the situation has now deemed necessary. And we will keep learning and keep moving forward.

In my office at home, I have the music and likeness of the three greatest musical prophets the world has ever known. The music, character and sheer genius of *J.S. Bach*, *Ludwig van Beethoven* and *Johannes Brahms* have always been a great source of guidance and inspiration for me during my career as a music teacher. All three of these men believed in what I also believe is important—*absolute music* or to say it more simply “music for music’s sake”.

Performing (and yes, sometimes competitions) are vital to our experience as musicians—whatever our current level of ability. Afterall, as Col. Lowell Graham said when he was here a few weeks ago we are in “the DOING arts”. And he is absolutely right. Especially in the sense of community we enjoy in performing *for* others. However, I think it's important to consider, especially in a time like this, the importance of music and what it means to us as a species. To have the ability to listen to and enjoy a Beethoven Piano Sonata, or a Bach Cello Suite or a Brahms symphony is to be human. Whether for one person (yourself) or a sold-out concert hall, the act of making music has been as unique to us as a species as the written and spoken word.

All of this to say—this is a time for us to really think about what music means to us. Do we do it because we love the applause? Sure, that never feels bad to receive a thunderous, standing ovation after the end of a concert.... but is that *why* we do it?

I would submit to you that we do it because we must. Those of us who have the music in us, we do it because we *can't not*. And, just because we are not in school in an ideal communal environment, doesn't mean we are unable to play, explore and love music, for the sake of music.

Beethoven had episodes where he would get lost in composing for hours on end. He described this as his *raptus*, Latin for "seized". Music would literally seize him for hours because he found it both so extraordinary and so necessary. I would encourage you these next days, weeks or however long this takes to really take time and just enjoy your playing and getting lost in the music.

The assignments we will send out over the next bit of time are not busy work, but rather a guide to help you keep going on this beautifully worthy endeavor you've been on since August. Take them seriously and do them to the best of your ability. We (the band staff) will do everything within our ability to help you and make this time as beneficial as possible. Do not hesitate to ask for guidance or clarification.

I'll leave you with something Beethoven heard often from his mother, especially in trying times. I think it is most appropriate for us here.

“Without suffering, there is no struggle, without struggle no victory, without victory, no crown.”

-Maria van Beethoven

We will get through this.

It will pass.

Life will go on and we will be better in the end for having gone through it.

In the meantime, try to enjoy developing your craft, your skill and your art and we will see you soon.

Be safe, be well and

Be Legendary,

Justin Harvison
Director of Bands
Germantown Band Program