

*Published on November 29, 2007 – www.hsmorchestra.org
Submitted 11/23/07 by Kyle G. Duncan*

Huntington Middle School Orchestra Begins Day Early

On a quiet, foggy morning in November, the first few students begin trickling in for the zero hour advanced orchestra practice at the Henry E. Huntington Middle School in San Marino, California. At 6:55 AM, while most of their fellow students are staggering into their kitchens for breakfast, students like Chloe Wu, Jonathan Su, Jomi Chen, and Kevin Lai can be found organizing and preparing the orchestra room.

“My set up crew,” Mr. Folsom, Huntington English and Music teacher and leader of the school’s orchestral programs, refers to them with a smile. “They are a dedicated group of students. I don’t need to tell them what to do—they just sort of come in and take over every morning. They get everything ready.”

Soon others arrive, and the advanced orchestra begins tuning up and playing scales. By the time the bell rings at 7:55 for the start of their regular school day, the award-winning Advanced Orchestra has completed a productive and exciting session. The daily routine has changed little over the past seven years, but in that time Mr. Folsom has endeavored to mix in a few surprises for the students. On a weekly basis, he arranges rotating string quartets, where students retire to the practice room and take on the latest musical challenge. There are also regular visitors like L.A. Philharmonic musician, Dale Breidenthol, who comes in every Monday to lend her expertise and help mentor the kids. Sometimes even old chums arrive, like former Huntington Middle School cello player and current San Marino High School student, Toby Morris.

The surprises, however, are not always planned. It has been reported by reliable sources that Mr. Folsom has been known to fling his baton across the room. “Yes,” Mr. Folsom chuckles. “That has happened once or twice. I assure you it is an accident!” And, we are happy to report that to date, nobody has lost an eye.

The current crop of students features many stand-out 8th graders, like Concert Master violinist Leslie Chae, assistant concert master Vivian Lee, and principal second Mathew Tsai. Other principal players include Rebecca Morris on viola, Brian Yip on cello, and Robbie Morton on bass. These and all of the other Advanced Orchestra players can be found in the wee morning hours Monday through Friday, working hard toward another year of excellence and accolades.

If you’d like to hear the next performance by this talented young group, join them at the Huntington Middle School Auditorium on December 14th at 8pm. The advanced orchestra will be playing Mendelssohn’s Sinfonia II in D, Mussorgsky’s Night on Bald Mountain, Vivaldi’s Concert in A Minor for Two Violins, and Rimsky-Korsakoff’s Capriccio Espagnol. The Intermediate and Chamber orchestras will also play additional selections. Huntington Auditorium is located at 1700 Huntington Drive. Admission is free.