



School Orchestra

Introducing Susan Whipkey at Northfield Public Schools

My name is Susan Whipkey. I am the orchestra director at Northfield Middle School and High School, and teach two general music classes at the Middle School. I have four ensembles that I direct: sixth grade orchestra, seventh and eighth grade orchestra, encore orchestra — a group of seventh and eighth graders who want more of a challenge and more performing opportunities, and the high school orchestra.

I graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire in May of 2000 with a bachelor's degree in instrumental music education. My interest in music stems from my mother, Nancy Whipkey, who has such an intense passion for music. When I was just a five-year-old, I began singing in her youth choir, the Ascension Youth Choir. My involvement lasted into my college years, and included two performances for Doc Severinson's Holiday Concert with the Minnesota Orchestra and producing two CDs. For the last four years, I have been a soprano in her adult choir.

When I was a fourth grader, I asked

my mother if it would be OK to start taking violin, like my older sister had just a year before. She quickly said that I would have to choose a different instrument and that she would not allow that sort of competition in her family. So I began my cello studies. I began private cello lessons right away along with my piano lessons. You could say that my weekday nights were overloaded with music! When I started eighth grade, it was time for me to study with a different teacher. From eighth grade to my senior year of high school, I studied with Robert Jamieson, the former principal cellist of the Minnesota Orchestra. It is truly amazing how much Mr. Jamieson enhanced my life. My interest and self-motivation jumped enormously, and my passion for the cello was unrelenting even during the high thumb position sections in the concertos I was tackling.

In college, I made the decision that I wanted to share my passion of music like my mother shared with me. I wanted to engage all students in music, and show them the depth and

power music has on the spirit. In order to experience the depth and power music has, hard work and dedication are essential. I think my students are finding that superb technique, flawless intonation, and precise rhythm coupled with musicality can grant them this experience with music.

I am looking forward to the rest of the year with my ensembles. Repertoire in all the orchestras extends from the early Baroque period, to the luscious Romantic period, to the 20th century with the sounds of jazz. I have received tremendous support from all of my colleagues in the music department. They have been so willing to take precious time from their schedules to answer my questions and concerns. The entire staff at both the Middle School and the High School have been so supportive. I appreciate this so much, and look forward to working with them all. I am so excited and proud to be a part of a community that has so much to offer its students and citizens. †