

*James E. Taylor High School Orchestra
2010 Armour Stage Performance at Symphony Center in Chicago
Chicago Trip Invitational Letter*

Thursday, February 19, 2009

Dear 2009.2010 Taylor High School Orchestra Students and Parents,

We have been invited to perform at the Armour Stage at Symphony Center in Chicago as a participant in the Circle of Honor Orchestra Festival on **Saturday, March 13, 2010**. It is indeed an honor to perform on this world famous stage. Earlier this month, I submitted our application, CD recording of our full orchestra at last year's UIL contest, and a letter of recommendation from Jeffrey Grogan, associate orchestra director of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra who has worked with our full orchestra each of the past five years. Consideration was given to a New York and Carnegie Hall trip for 2010 but the fee was prohibitively high (\$2125.00 per person). I chose Circle of Honor Festival, in Chicago because of its outstanding reputation for providing a superior festival, the opportunity to perform on a world class stage (Amour Stage is the stage that the Chicago Symphony performs on regularly), and the very reasonable fee (\$1350 per person) that they are offering. In addition to our letter of invitation, I have secured approval for this trip from Mr. David Kendler, James E. Taylor High School Principal, and Mr. Robert Bryant, Katy ISD Executive Director of Fine Arts.

I am excited for the opportunity to perform on Armour Stage at Symphony Center in Chicago, Illinois. Our performances will offer our orchestras a true mountain peak experience for the students, parents and directors. We have been invited to bring two orchestras. All of our students will be invited to perform. The Chamber and Philharmonic Strings will combine with the winds, brass, and percussion of the top two Taylor High School bands to form our Symphony Orchestra (full orchestra) and the Concert Blue and White Orchestras will combine to form the Concert String Orchestra. I envision that our experience will also be an exciting and culturally enriching one. **We will continue to pursue this opportunity provided that we have a high percentage of student performers (approximately 80%) and parent chaperones (one chaperone for every 5 students). We need a high participation so that we will have a representative instrumentation for each orchestra. We need one chaperone per five students participating so that we can safely travel around the city in small groups. Additionally, we will need to have one couple (husband and wife or two Dads) who are both willing and able to drive a rental equipment truck with our larger instruments to and from Chicago to safeguard our instruments (The travel and hotel expenses of the drivers will be free).** To keep our student cost as low as possible, it will once again be necessary that the parent chaperones pay the same rate for their participation on this trip (The parents however will be housed in double occupancy while the students will be housed in quad occupancy). Our annual spring trips have gone exceedingly well because we had a balanced instrumentation and ample parent chaperones (who paid the same fee as the students) to insure that our students were safe at all times.

Reminder: We are only allowed to apply for a spring trip that exceeds the 400 mile limit once every four years. If this trip does not have the requisite participation, (as indicated by a \$250.00 non-refundable deposit and completed form.) we will offer a three day trip to New Orleans and the next "big" trip year we will propose will be in Spring, 2014.

Chicago Trip Information Meeting: We will have a **parents only** 2010 Chicago/*Armour Stage* trip meeting on **Thursday, February 26, 2009 at 7:00PM in the THS Orchestra room**. All interested parents should attend this informative meeting.

Transportation: We will fly with Continental Airlines and use Coach USA bus service for most of our land travel unless the event is within a short walking distance.

Dates: Thursday, March 11, 2010 – Monday, March 15, 2010: Participating students will only miss one day of school (even though we are allowed to miss two days for this trip) because the remaining days of our trip are within the Katy ISD Spring vacation. We are leaving late on Thursday rather than Friday morning to avoid any concerns for snow storms that may occur in the March. We will likely fly to Chicago on a 6:00PM flight (departing from THS after 2:35PM) on Thursday evening, March 11th for a late evening arrival in Chicago. Specific times and particular airports will be announced later.

Chicago Trip information and Updates: Please consult the James E. Taylor Orchestra Website for updates and/or extra copies of our Chicago trip information materials (including this letter). Our website address is **taylororchestra.org**.

Attractions and Values included:

- 1) All meals will be included.

- a. Breakfasts will be provided at the hotel.
 - b. Lunches at Au Bon Pain, DJ/ Lunch Cruise departure from the Navy Pier on Lake Michigan, Capi's
 - c. Dinners at Ginos; Bubba Gumps, Ed Debevics, Rainforest Cafe
- 2) A performance on the Armour Stage, a world class stage and home of the Chicago Symphony
 - 3) Critiques by nationally acclaimed adjudicators
 - 4) Rehearsal hall expenses and rental
 - 5) Gangster tour – our tour providers will be dressed as circa 1950 gangster and provide an hour and half tour of the highlights of the city of Chicago
 - 6) A ticket to a Chicago Symphony Orchestra concert.
 - 7) A ticket to Blue Man Group
 - 8) All land and air transportation costs.
 - 9) Lodging costs (students - quad occupancy and chaperones – double occupancy) in the Wyndham Hotel in Chicago
 - 10) All hotel taxes, both city and state.
 - 11) Tour of U 505
 - 12) A ticket for the Shedd Aquarium
 - 13) A ticket for the Water Tower Place
 - 14) A ticket for the Art Museum
 - 15) A ticket for the Museum of Science and Industry
 - 16) A ticket for the Field Museum
 - 17) A ticket for the Adler Planetarium
 - 18) A ticket for Hancock Observatory
 - 19) Shopping at Navy Pier
 - 20) Commemorative group award.
 - 21) Orchestra will be recorded by the recording engineer of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.
 - 22) Professional recording with master provided for reproduction (free recording for each participant)



Security: As always, security will be of the utmost importance. Our hotel accommodations and transportation will be secure. All students will travel with chaperones all times. **No student will be permitted to diverge from the Taylor Orchestra group to visit with family and/or friends outside of the official Taylor Orchestra group at any time. All students will be required to stay with the entire THS Orchestra or with their assigned tour chaperones as will be described in our trip timeline. This trip will not permit any of us to personalize or deviate from our Chicago and Armour StageTrip Itinerary. Safety is our first concern!**

Student Fundraising: The students will be invited to participate in our annual Friends of Taylor High School Orchestra Pages fundraiser in August, 2009. With this fundraiser, students may solicit ad space from local vendors in our annual publication of the Friends of Taylor Orchestra Pages and have these company names listed in each of our 2009.2010 Concert programs. The profit percentage is approximately 90%. This endeavor has proved to be quite successful for those students that have participated in the past. In 2002 and 2006, we had students fully fund their trip to New York (\$1225 in 2002 & \$1550 in 2006) via this project. Any monies raised in this student fundraiser will go into his or her individualized Chicago trip account. It is advisable that all students consider earning money via baby sitting, cutting lawns, and garage sales as early as possible so that they may help to pay or defray the costs of this trip.

Parent fundraising will be critical to meeting our goal of reducing the cost for both the students and chaperones. **Any funds raised by parent fundraising projects will be globally applied to reducing the cost of each student and parent chaperone equally.** All parents of the participants will need to do their fair share with the parent fundraising projects so that the reduction in costs realized by all will be earned by all. Our very best will be good enough.

Suggested parent fundraiser ideas include: Scrip cards, Auctions, multi-family garage sales, grants (single & double match), and inviting local restaurants to have Taylor Orchestra nights at their restaurants in return for a percentage of their proceeds. We will consider other fundraising ideas beyond what are listed above.

Cost: The estimated cost for each student and chaperone is \$1350.00. Both student performers and adult chaperones will pay the same price but the adults will be housed in double occupancy rather than the quadruple accommodations that the students will have. The estimated cost is based on a minimum of 80% participation in the string enrollment and 30 wind, brass, and percussion performers. We will need one adult chaperone per five performers. **The fee schedule shown below will be implemented. Your timely payments are essential for the success of this endeavor. Tardy payments**

would jeopardize our keeping up with our payment schedule. We do not have money in reserve to prepay late payments. Feel free to pay ahead of schedule or in full to avoid the hassle of individual payments. In the event of a cancellation of participation by a student performer or adult chaperone only check or cash payment monies will be refunded to that individual. **It is a Katy I.S.D. policy that fundraised monies are not refundable at any time for any reason. Supporters will donate or purchase goods and services from our orchestra membership with the understanding that any profit monies will be used solely for defraying or covering the cost of this Chicago trip.**

Taylor High School Orchestra Chicago 2010 Payment Schedule:

Thursday, February 26, 2009	\$250.00	Non-refundable deposit
Wednesday, August 26, 2009	\$220.00	Payment No. 2
Wednesday, September 23, 2009	\$220.00	Payment No. 3
Wednesday, October 21, 2009	\$220.00	Payment No. 4
Wednesday, November 18, 2009	\$220.00	Payment No. 5
Wednesday, December 2, 2009	\$220.00	Payment No. 6

TOTAL \$1350.00

2010 Taylor High School Orchestra Chicago Trip Refund Schedule:

Monday, February 23, 2009 – January 8, 2010	<u>*Full refund less \$250.00</u>
January 9, 2010 and later	<u>No refund</u>

***Reminder: Only cash or check payment monies will be refunded. Fundraised money can not be refunded to any individual at any time.**

Academic Eligibility: There will be no refunds for academic ineligibility. All students must have a minimum of a 70% average in each and every class during the previous six weeks before the Chicago trip or at the progress report (**if that applies!**). **It is advisable to consider not going on this trip if you know that your eligibility could cause you to miss the trip.**

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 281-237-3652. Thank you for your time and consideration of this fun-filled educational trip.

Sincerely,

George Engelmann
James E. Taylor High School
Orchestra Director

JAMES E. TAYLOR ORCHESTRA 2010 CHICAGO TRIP
LETTER OF AGREEMENT

Please return this completed form with a \$250.00 check made payable to T.O.P.A. Put the form in a sealed and labeled envelope (your name on the front of the envelope) and return it to Mr. Engelmann (Eighth Graders may return their envelopes to their orchestra director.) on or before Thursday, February 26, 2009 or have your parent turn in the envelope at the Chicago Trip Meeting on 2.26.09

I have read the attached pages of the 2010 James E. Taylor High School Orchestra Chicago Trip. I understand and will adhere to the payment and refund schedule described if my child performs and/or if I participate as an adult chaperone.

PLEASE MAKE YOUR CHECKS PAYABLE TO T.O.P.A.

STUDENT RESPONSES:

_____ Yes, I will be going on the Orchestra trip to Chicago in March, 2010. Attached is my full payment of **\$1350.00** for my spring trip costs with the understanding that I will be eligible for a full refund less \$250.00 until **January 8, 2010**. After **January 8, 2010** no refunds will be given.

_____ Yes, I will be going on the Orchestra trip to Chicago in March, 2010. Attached is my **non-refundable deposit of \$250.00** toward my spring trip costs and will make each payment on /or before each scheduled payment date listed in the attached letter with the understanding that I will be eligible for a full refund less \$250.00 until **January 8, 2010**. After **January 8, 2010** no refunds will be given.

_____ No, I will be unable to participate in the Taylor Orchestra Chicago trip in April, 2010.

PARENT RESPONSES:

_____ Yes, I am willing and available to help chaperone for the James E. Taylor Orchestra trip to Chicago in March, 2010. Attached is my full payment of **\$1350.00** for my spring trip cost with the understanding that I will be eligible for a full refund less \$250.00 until **January 8, 2010**. After **January 8, 2010** no refunds will be given.

_____ Yes, I am willing and available to help chaperone for the James E. Taylor Orchestra trip to Chicago in March, 2010. Attached is my non-refundable deposit of \$250.00 toward my spring trip costs and will make each payment on /or before each scheduled payment date listed in the attached letter with the understanding that I will be eligible for a full refund less \$250.00 until **January 8, 2010**. After **January 8, 2010** no refunds will be given.

_____ No, I will be unable to help chaperone the Taylor Orchestra Chicago trip in March, 2010.

Student Name: (Print neatly please): _____

Student Signature: _____

Parent Name: (Print neatly please) _____

Parent Signature: _____